

# **On the Content of Apologies**

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## **On the Content of Apologies**

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On the Content of Apologies

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# INTRODUCTION

## 1. Introduction

A: Wow! You are really friends again?

B: Yes.

A: How did that happen?

B: I apologized.

A: Really? That is all?

The introductory dialogue is short and imaginary, but I think it is realistic and illustrates how fascinating apologies can be. Indeed, writing about apologies many authors have referred to their magic (cf. Bibas & Bierschbach, 2004; Tavuchis, 1991, p. 5). And yet, we come across apologies or apologize in various settings ranging from the personal to the public realm. Apologizing is something we learn at a fairly young age and become acquainted with in everyday life (Schleien, Ross, & Ross, 2010). Despite apologies being so omnipresent, not only scholars ask what we actually know about the act of apologizing (e.g., Meier, 1998; Smith, 2008, pp. 10-12). Also non-scholarly thinkers have discovered that it is not clear to many people what an apology actually is. They try to offer a helping hand for people who want to apologize. Hence, they have published books such as *“The One Minute Apology”* by Blanchard and McBride (2003) or *“How to Apologize to Your Woman...”* by Field Bolek (2011), or established websites such as [www.perfectapology.com](http://www.perfectapology.com). All of these sources attempt to give the readers a guide for how to exactly offer an apology. The goal of my dissertation project was not to establish an ultimate guide for apologizing. However, with my research I did try to uncover some of the magic that is still accredited to apologies.

Certainly apologies are not always a magic potion for conflict resolution (cf. Philpot & Hornsey, 2008). Some people transgressed might reject any apology. For example, Claes and Clifton (1998) cite a rape victim who says “I am not the slightest bit interested in your bloody apologies. Apologies are words and words are like dust in the wind” (p. 145). In other cases apologies are not rejected at all but the receiving persons are merely not satisfied with them. Also having interviewed a rape

victim after she had received an apology, Naylor (1997) for example cites her saying “There’s probably maybe [sic] a few loose ends that he and I need to talk about. You know, I want to be able to say to him, ‘You won’t do this again, will you?’.” (minute 39:54 - 40:02). The latter statement suggests that the person was missing something in the apology – such as a promise that the transgression will not be repeated – which kept her from really accepting it. Examples of intergroup apologies have also been discussed in the literature with a focus on the question what the missing content was that kept victimized groups from accepting the apology (e.g., Iyer & Blatz, 2012). Govier and Verwoerd (2002) wrote about an intergroup apology in 1996 by the former South African President De Klerk addressing Apartheid. They analyzed why his apology was rejected by receivers of the apology. In their opinion it was problematic that the admission of responsibility for the transgressions within the apology was only partial. With my dissertation project I wanted to address the questions *which* content of apologies contributes to their effectiveness and *why* the content impacts on their effectiveness. In addition, I wanted to scrutinize if the effectiveness of different contents in the apology varies depending on the severity of the transgression for which the apology is offered.

In section 1.1 of this dissertation project, I outline how apologies can be defined. Subsequently, in section 1.2, the leading questions of the dissertation project are developed by drawing from previous literature. I state why it is important to separate research on interpersonal apologies and research on intergroup apologies (1.2.1) and introduce measurements for the effectiveness of apologies (1.2.2). Afterwards I outline theoretical assumptions on the question which components of apologies contribute to their effectiveness (1.2.3.1) and how the severity of transgression might influence this relationship (1.2.3.2). In section 1.2.4 the reduction of anger (1.2.4.1) and the fulfillment of needs (1.2.4.2) are theoretically derived as mediator variables which could explain the apology’s effectiveness. Subsequently I highlight why I chose to analyze apologies in experimental settings (1.2.5). Before the three manuscripts which together form the dissertation project are displayed in section 2, 3, and 4, I give a short overview on the three manuscripts (1.2.6). Finally, in

section 5, the overarching results of the three studies are critically discussed and implications for further research projects are suggested.

### **1.1 Defining Apologies**

In this section apologies are introduced from a descriptive angle. It is also highlighted where the leading questions of this dissertation project can be located within a descriptive approach to apologies.

Apologies have been referred to as accounts (e.g., Itoi, Ohbuchi, & Fukuno, 1996; Schönbach, 1980<sup>1</sup>). Scott and Lyman (1968) define an account as “a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior” (p. 46). Other authors have considered apologies as speech acts (e.g., Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Searle, 1969), standing in the tradition of Austin (1962), who had suggested this understanding of apologies. In the current literature both categorizations of apologies, those that refer to them as accounts (e.g., Leonard, Macki, & Smith, 2011) and those that consider them as speech-acts (e.g., Kampf, 2009), can still be found. In the following I will refer to apologies neither as accounts nor as speech-acts but simply as acts. I decided so because of two reasons: Firstly, several authors explicitly differentiate apologies from accounts (Adsit, 2009; Goffman, 1971, pp. 109-118; Tavuchis, 1991, pp. 15-18). Secondly, already Austin (1962, p. 108) stated that apologizing can also be achieved by non-verbal means.

Going beyond merely subsuming apologies under common categories the question is “What exactly is an apology?”. In general, apologies are described as a private or public act that is performed and perceived in relation to a conduct which resulted in a conflict<sup>2</sup>; the performing actor can be held responsible for the conduct or s/he is a representative of those responsible (cf. Adsit, 2009, pp. 71-77; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Gill, 2000; Tavuchis, 1991, pp. 98-100). However, at this point the agreement regarding an exact definition ceases. The disagreement particularly applies to

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<sup>1</sup> Schönbach (1980) labels apologies as concessions.

<sup>2</sup> The conflict can be an intrapersonal, an interpersonal or an intergroup one.

descriptions of the components of apologies but also to descriptions of the functions of apologies (Adsit, 2009). In the following (section 1.1.1 and 1.1.2) both of these descriptive approaches are introduced.

### **1.1.1 Components of Apologies**

Various models have been developed suggesting what components can be included in an act in order to be described as an apology (e.g., Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Goffman, 1971). Goffman (1971) for example states the following:

In its fullest form, the apology has several elements: expression of embarrassment and chagrin, clarification that one knows what conduct had been expected and sympathizes with the application of negative sanction; verbal rejection, repudiation, and disavowal of the wrong way of behaving along with vilification of the self that so behaved; espousal of the right way and an avowal henceforth to pursue that course; performance of penance and the volunteering of restitution. (p. 113)

Some authors even suggest models that state which components *have* to be included in a statement in order to count as an apology (e.g., Gill, 2000; Kort, 1975). For example, Kort (1975) writes that:

a speaker is apologizing to his hearer for something, if and only if in saying what he does, is 1) expressing regret about it, 2) accepting responsibility for it, 3) acknowledging it to constitute an offense to his hearer, 4) expressing regret about it as such and 5) making a gesture of respect to his hearer as a person with a right to be spared such mistreatment. (p. 87)

So far no consistent model of the components of apologies has been established. In line with my diploma thesis we have conducted a comprehensive literature review, trying to organize the vast variety of suggested components of apology in the literature (cf. Kirchhoff, Strack, & Jäger, 2009). We qualitatively analyzed 39 studies published between 1971 and 2008 in the area of jurisprudence, sociolinguistics, sociology, theology, philosophy, and psychology. As a result of the literature review we identified the following 10 components of apology as reoccurring in the literature:

1. Saying an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) such as “I apologize”,
2. naming the transgression,
3. taking responsibility,
4. conveying emotions,
5. addressing emotions and/or damage on behalf of the offended,
6. admitting fault or norm violation,
7. attempting to explain the transgression,
8. promising forbearance,
9. offering reparation, and
10. asking for acceptance of the apology.

We suggested that the 10 components can be distinguished as distinct content of apology and that further research has to find answers to the question which combinations of these components contribute to the apology’s effectiveness. Nevertheless, the model by Kirchhoff et al. (2009) has been developed primarily for the interpersonal context. With the dissertation project I also wanted to research on intergroup apologies, thus I further considered a model by Blatz, Schumann, and Ross (2009). Based on a comprehensive qualitative review on previous public apologies Blatz et al. (2009) have introduced four further reoccurring components of apologies that have been suggested to be particularly relevant in the intergroup context (cf. Iyer & Blatz, 2012):

1. Praising the victimized,
2. praising the perpetrating group,
3. praising the present system, and
4. dissociating the present system from the past system.

The 10-component model and the additional four elements by Blatz et al. (2009) served as a reference frame for finding answers to the question which content of apologies is effective. The components were scrutinized in different combinations in the studies on apologies of the dissertation project. The studies are introduced in section 1.2.6.

### 1.1.2 Functions of Apologies

Another approach for describing apologies focuses on the functions of apologies rather than their content. Yet, just as definitions on apologies that refer to the content of apologies vary, definitions that describe the functions of apologies vary, too. The functions of the act have been described by referring to the actor(s), i.e. the person or group offering the apology, the recipient(s) of the act, their relationship, and the broader social system. Goffman (1971) for example emphasizes the function of apologies for the actor(s) by describing apologies as resulting in image restoration (cf. also Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Lazare (2004) has stressed the function of apologies as acts which have an impact on the psychological state of the receiver(s) such as the fulfillment of violated needs after a conflict has taken place. Describing the importance of apologies for conflict resolution Tavuchis (1991) has focused on the relationship of actor(s) and receiver(s) when describing the function of apologies (cf. also Petrucci, 2002). Gill (2000) and Smith (2008) have underlined the meaning of apologies for the broader social system by describing them as acts that reaffirm a normative framework.

In conclusion, it can be said that in the literature apologies are described as private or public acts which are performed and perceived in relation to a conduct that resulted in a conflict. The performing actor can be held responsible for the conduct or is a representative of those responsible. Two approaches can be distinguished as to how the act is described as an apology. This is a. by the components of the act and b. by the functions of the act. The dissertation project analyzed questions within the realm of this descriptive framework. The specific focus was laid on analyzing:

- a. the semantic components of apologies in the realm of interpersonal as well as intergroup conflicts with reference to the models of components of apology by Blatz et al. (2009) and Kirchhoff et al. (2012) and
- b. the function of apologies by focusing on the psychological state of the recipient(s) of the act (i.e., that of the transgressed person or group).



## 1.2 The Dissertation Project

In the following sections the leading questions of the dissertation project are developed. After highlighting why it is important to do research on interpersonal and intergroup apologies separately (1.2.1), possible measurements for testing the effectiveness of apologies are introduced (1.2.2). Then I outline how I developed the hypotheses that address the questions *which* content of apologies is effective (1.2.3) and *why* the effectiveness of the content varies (1.2.4). Afterwards it is explained why an experimental approach was chosen for the analysis of the hypotheses (1.2.5). Concluding, an overview on the three manuscripts of the dissertation project is given (1.2.6).

### 1.2.1 Interpersonal vs. Intergroup Apologies

When researching on apologies, the distinction between interpersonal and intergroup apologies is crucial as there is at least one fundamental difference which influences the act as such. In contrast to interpersonal settings, apologies in intergroup settings call for a representative of the group uttering the apology. Consequently, it needs to be defined who would be an adequate representative of the group (Govier & Verwoerd, 2002; Griswold, 2007, p. 139; Hatch, 2006; Smith, 2008; pp. 207-210; Wohl, Hornsey, & Philpot, 2011). The standing of the representative as well as his/her prototypicality as a group member very likely influences the way an apology is perceived by those receiving the apology (cf. Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1998; Tavuchis, 1991, p. 101; Smith, 2008, pp. 207-210). Due to this difference intergroup apologies are often highly scripted and are carefully composed prior to their performance. This standardization of the event results in constraints for the representative to react with flexibility when uttering the intergroup apology (Govier & Verwoerd, 2002; Tavuchis, 1991; pp. 69-70, 100). Due to the highlighted major difference between interpersonal and intergroup apologies the dissertation project dealt with interpersonal and intergroup apologies separately. It should also be noted that research on intergroup apologies has so far remained particularly sparse (cf. Ashy, Mercurio, & Malley-Morrison, 2010; Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Wohl et al., 2011).

### **1.2.2 Measurements of Effectiveness of Apologies**

One major issue when researching on apologies is to decide how to determine the effectiveness of apologies (cf. Adsit, 2009). Researchers have focused on scrutinizing forgiveness in order to assess the effectiveness of apologies in both the interpersonal (e.g., Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Fukuno & Ohbuchi, 1998; Gunderson & Ferrari, 2008) and the intergroup context (e.g., Brown, Wohl, & Exline, 2008; Leonard et al., 2011; Wohl, Hornsey, & Bennett, 2012). However, it has to be emphasized that an apology might not directly result in forgiveness on behalf of the transgressed as forgiveness can involve a longer process (cf. McCullough et al., 1998). Furthermore, despite the fact that an apology might have forgiveness as its ultimate goal, the transgressed can accept the apologetic utterance but are in no way required to forgive (Allan, Allan, Kaminer, & Stein, 2006; Byrne, 2004; Takaku, Weiner, & Ohbuchi, 2001; Weiner, Graham, Peter, & Zmuidinas, 1991). Hence, it is reasonable to *also* assess the acceptance of the apology in order to evaluate their effectiveness in the interpersonal (cf. Bolkan & Daly, 2009; Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Förster, & Montada, 2004) as well as in the intergroup context (cf. Blatz, 2008, p. 4; Leonard et al., 2011). The differentiation between the acceptance of an apology and forgiveness was considered particularly important in the studies on intergroup apologies. Reason for this was that the concept of intergroup forgiveness involves critical issues like the fact that the receivers of the apology often have to forgive on behalf of others. The latter has been proven to negatively impact on forgiveness (cf. Brown et al., 2008).

### **1.2.3 Which Content of Apologies is Effective?**

In the following it is outlined how the first set of hypotheses of the dissertation project has been developed. The meaning of the components of apology for their effectiveness (1.2.3.1) and the dependency of this relationship on the severity of the transgression for which the apology is offered (1.2.3.2) are theoretically underpinned.

### **1.2.3.1 The Impact of Components in the Apology**

Many scholars have conducted research on the effectiveness of interpersonal apologies compared to other acts such as excuses or to giving no apology at all (e.g., Bennett & Earwaker, 1994; Fukuno & Ohbuchi, 1998; Risen & Gilovich, 2007; Takaku et al. 2001). Such an approach for example is concerned with the question whether an apology is more effective than excuses that follow a transgression (e.g., Fukuno & Ohbuchi, 1998). However, such an approach does not allow insights into the composition of an apology (cf. De Cremer & Schouten, 2008; Fehr & Gelfand, 2010).

In the relevant literature I found only a handful of experimental studies that explicitly looked at interpersonal apologies in terms of their components. These studies revealed that the success or failure of interpersonal apologies indeed seems to depend on their composition (e.g., Anderson, Linden, & Habra, 2006; Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Fehr & Gelfand, 2010; Robbennolt, 2003, study A; Scher & Darley, 1997; Schmitt et al. 2004).

Just like in the interpersonal context, most of the existing experimental studies on intergroup apologies such as the studies by Brown et al. (2008), Philpot and Hornsey (2008; 2010) as well as Leonard et al. (2011) researched primarily on the general effectiveness of intergroup apologies. They compared the effects of intergroup apologies on forgiveness with responses in a no-apology condition. Yet, other researchers support the idea that the content of intergroup apologies is very critical (Griswold, 2007, p. 151; Tavuchis, 1991, p. 100). Nevertheless, the few existing experimental studies on the content of intergroup apologies do not agree whether content matters (Blatz, 2008; study 1; Wohl et al., 2012, study 4) or not (Philpot & Hornsey, 2008, study 4).

It is problematic that the operationalization of the content of apologies varied across the previous research. Thus, it is still an open question which components of apologies contribute or do not to their effectiveness. Indeed, as stated in the introduction (1.1.2), so far no consistent model of the components of apologies has been established. The 10-component model by Kirchhoff et al. (2009)

and the additions by Blatz et al. (2009) for the intergroup context served as a reference frame for the operationalization of the components in the studies of the dissertation project. The goal was to systematize the assessment of the effectiveness of apologies depending on their content. To do so we carefully operationalized the components of apologies in line with the two models. We referred to the model by Kirchhoff et al. (2009) in the interpersonal context and to both the model by Blatz et al. (2009) and Kirchhoff et al. (2009) in the intergroup context. Furthermore, instead of comparing only the effects of one apology to a no-apology condition we tested the effects of adding components to apologies containing fewer components. This way we were able to scrutinize which components in an apology contribute to increasing the effectiveness of the apology. The analyses were conducted for the interpersonal (Manuscript 1) and the intergroup context (Manuscript 2) separately.

#### **1.2.3.2 The Impact of Components in the Apology Depending on Transgression Severity**

Most research on apologies has focused on interpersonal apologies following minor offences such as spilling coffee on somebody else (e.g., Fukuno & Ohbuchi, 1998; Risen & Gilovich, 2007). However, apologies seem to be especially desired after more severe offences (cf. Coicaud & Jönsson, 2008; Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989). Furthermore, the question of what constitutes an acceptable apology in terms of its content seems to depend on the severity of the transgression (e.g., Fehr & Gelfand, 2010). Allan et al. (2006) found that following human rights violations people tend to forgive more easily if the perpetrator apologized with “true sorrowiness”. But how can the content of an apology for such severe transgressions convey this “true sorrowiness”? In a theoretical analysis Benoit (1995) writes that accounts (such as apologies and excuses) following less severe offences are more likely to be accepted. He continues by suggesting that the given account is acceptable when it “outweighs the offence” (p. 43). Similarly, Ohbuchi et al. (1989) suggest that particularly after more severe offences more elaborate apologies may be needed. Hence, in Manuscript 1 and 2

we have also analyzed the relationship between the components in an apology and the effectiveness of the apology (cf. 1.2.3.1) for transgressions of varying severity.

#### **1.2.4 Why is the Content of Apologies Differently Effective?**

In addition to the question *which* content of apologies is effective we also wanted to identify a mechanism that explains *why* the content of apologies impacts on their effectiveness. Therefore, we wanted to analyze relevant mediator variables for the relationship between the content of apologies and measurements of their effectiveness. These mediator variables are the reduction of anger (1.2.4.1) and the fulfillment of needs (1.2.4.2).

##### **1.2.4.1 Anger Reduction as a Mediator Between the Content of Apology and its Effectiveness**

Studies have already shown that the reduction of negative emotions can serve as a mediator variable between forgiveness and concepts such as ruminating over an offence as well as perspective taking (McCullough, Bono, & Root, 2007; Takaku, 2001). Previous studies on interpersonal apologies have focused on scrutinizing the negative emotion anger and whether it is reduced by an apology. However, this has been done without simultaneously considering the effect of the apology on forgiveness or reconciliation (e.g., Anderson et al., 2006; Hareli & Eisikovits, 2006; Schmitt et al., 2004). Such considerations would allow for testing whether the reduction of anger mediates the relationship between the utterance of an interpersonal apology and forgiveness. Our studies stood in the tradition of studies that researched on the effects of interpersonal apologies on anger but took the research a step further. Thus, in Manuscript 1 it was analyzed whether or not a reduction of anger explains the relationship between the content of interpersonal apologies and forgiveness.

On the intergroup level the effect of apologies on anger reduction has also been of interest. The idea is that group based emotions such as anger impede conflict resolution (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011, p. 224). Many have suggested that anger in particular plays a crucial role for intergroup

conflict and intergroup forgiveness, because it inhibits the latter (Manzi & González, 2007; Philpot & Hornsey, 2010; Tam et al., 2007). Leonard et al. (2011) have shown that anger mediated the relationship between intergroup apologies and the desire for retribution. Within the dissertation project I wanted to scrutinize whether or not the reduction of anger can explain the relationship between the content of intergroup apologies and the acceptance of the apology or intergroup forgiveness. We did so in Manuscript 2.

#### **1.2.4.2 Need Fulfillment as a Mediator Between the Content of Apology and its Effectiveness**

During an interpersonal or intergroup conflict needs of people are insulted, which have to be addressed afterwards in order to achieve reconciliation (e.g., Shnabel, Nadler, Canetti-Nisim, & Ullrich, 2008). Hence, another mediator variable that could explain the relationship between the content of apology and measurements of their effectiveness is the fulfillment of needs that have been violated due to the transgression for which the apology is offered. When interested in the question if interpersonal apologies are effective because they fulfill violated needs, we have to know what human needs are violated from the perspective of people transgressed in conflict. It is problematic that need categories suggested in the literature are heterogeneous and only seldom analyzed by means of empirical data (e.g., Max-Neef, Elizalde, & Hopenhayn, 1991; Obrecht, 2005). Therefore, one goal of the dissertation project was to systematize categories of needs based on empirical data. The focus was laid on identifying reoccurring needs that are violated concerning people who have been offended in an interpersonal conflict. With Manuscript 3 this research goal was addressed.

On the intergroup level the fulfillment of the need for empowerment on behalf of victims is prominently discussed as contributing to conflict resolution (e.g., Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Shnabel, Nadler, Canetti-Nisim, and Ullrich (2009) empirically support the idea that members of a victimized group show greater willingness to reconcile when they perceive a message of empowerment. In their concept of moral apologies Govier and Verwoerd (2002) emphasize that

an apology most importantly has to accomplish the acknowledgement of the victims' human dignity, thus conveying a message of empowerment. In line with this I wanted to analyze whether a perception of a message of empowerment can explain the relationship between the content of intergroup apologies and measurements of their effectiveness. This question was targeted in Manuscript 2.

### **1.2.5 Analyzing Apologies in Experimental Settings**

Olshtain and Cohen (1983) state that "the best approach to collecting data about speech acts is the ethnographic approach – i.e., the collection of spontaneous speech in natural settings" (p. 24). In line with this many previous studies on apologies have chosen a qualitative approach by for example analyzing the content of published apologies (e.g., Kampf, 2008, 2009; Lind, 2008; Nobles, 2008) or asking people how they would apologize for a transgression (e.g., Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Suszczynska, 1999). This approach produces results of high external validity. However, I decided to apply a quantitative experimental approach. The main reason for this is that the higher internal validity allows for a clear interpretation of the results with regard to identifying the causal relation between the content included in the apology and measurements of the effectiveness of the apology.

Furthermore, when researching on the effects of apologies from the perspective of the transgressed, it is important to control variables that in addition to the direct effect of the speech act influence people's reaction in conflict. This is possible in experimental research. Culture, for example, is a relevant variable as it might profoundly influence the act of apologizing (e.g., Coicaud & Jönsson, 2008; Takaku et al., 2001). The context in which the apology is offered such as the location in which it is addressed (Wohl et al., 2011), the closeness of the relationship (Fukuno & Ohbuchi, 1998) or the timing of the apology (Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Frantz & Bennis, 2004) also may play a crucial role. Individual differences might also influence the way the apology is sensed (e.g., Smith, 2008, p. 249; Schmitt et al., 2004). Possible confounding variables are for example gender, age, ingroup identification or trait forgiveness (cf. e.g., Alter, 1999; Brown et al., 2008).

These variables can be held constant or controlled in an approach that experimentally analyzes apologies.

### 1.2.6 Overview on the Three Manuscripts of the Dissertation Project

The dissertation project includes three manuscripts. Manuscript 1 has the title "*Apologies: Words of Magic? The Role of Verbal Components, Anger Reduction, and Offence Severity*" and has already been published. Manuscript 2 was named "*Intergroup Apologies: Does it Matter What they Say? Experimental Analyses in Germany as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina*" and is currently under review<sup>3</sup>. The last paper, Manuscript 3, with the title "*The Needs of Victims: An Empirical Categorization*" has the status of an invited resubmission<sup>4</sup>. In the following an overview on the three Manuscripts is given.

Manuscript 1 consists of two online studies conducted in Germany (Study 1: N = 192; Study 2: N = 88), which experimentally analyzed hypotheses about apologies following an interpersonal conflict. The conflict we chose took place in a neighbourhood setting. The first hypothesis of each study in Manuscript 1 addressed the question which content of interpersonal apologies increases the likelihood of forgiveness by the transgressed person.<sup>5</sup> We systematically varied the content of the apology in line with the model on the components of apology by Kirchhoff et al. (2009). The apologies we investigated included either one, four, five, or all of the 10 components suggested by Kirchhoff et al. (2009). In Study 1 the particular combination of components was based on suggestions on the components' importance in previous literature. In Study 2 the combination of the components was based on an importance rating conducted at the end of Study 1. Furthermore,

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<sup>3</sup> Currently means: December 2012. The status was still the same in March 2013.

<sup>4</sup> At the time of the first submission of the dissertation (December 2012) the article had recently been submitted. At the time of the defence of the dissertation (March 2013), the article already had the status "invited resubmission". The status was changed accordingly in this print version of the dissertation.

<sup>5</sup> While in Manuscript 1 it is asked "how" apologies are effective, we changed the phrasing of this question in this outline of the dissertation project and in Manuscript 2 to "Which content of apologies is effective?". Throughout the course of the dissertation project we decided to do so in order to more precisely describe that it is the content we are focusing on when asking how apologies can be effective.



in the first study of Manuscript 1 the first hypothesis suggested that the effects of varying the content of the apology on the likelihood of forgiveness would particularly appear in the aftermath of a more severe transgression. In the second study we only researched on the transgression that had been declared as the more severe transgression in the first study. The second hypothesis in both studies explored the relationship between the content of apology and forgiveness by analyzing the reduction of anger as a mediator variable. The latter hypothesis aimed at finding answers to the question *why* the content of interpersonal apologies contributes to their effectiveness.

In Manuscript 2 two experimental online studies were included, one of which was conducted in Germany (N = 289) and the other one in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH, N = 110). Similar hypotheses as in Manuscript 1 were addressed, but this time in the intergroup context. In Germany the intergroup context was discrimination based on gender while in BiH war crimes between 1992 and 1995 served as the intergroup context. We analyzed the question which content of intergroup apologies is effective by varying the components of the apologies. Effectiveness was measured in terms of a change in the acceptance of the apology and intergroup forgiveness by members of the victimized group. The content of the intergroup apologies was varied in line with the models by Blatz et al. (2009) and Kirchhoff et al. (2009). Having learned from Manuscript 1 we pretested on the relevance of the components for the given contexts in each of the studies. Based on the pre-tests we varied the components in the apology by including either the two, the three, the four, or the five most relevant components in the apologies. We also wanted to detect if the other components suggested by Blatz et al. (2009) and Kirchhoff et al. (2009) still had an effect on the dependent measures if the five most relevant components were already included in the apology. Thus, we also tested an apology with all components rated as possibly relevant for the given context in the pretests (Study 1: 11 components, Study 2: 14 components). Just like in Manuscript 1 it was suggested that the effects of varying the content in the apology on their perception can be observed particularly following a more severe transgression. Further, we scrutinized two possible mediator

variables for the relationship between the content of the intergroup apology and measurements of its effectiveness: the reduction of anger and perceived empowerment.

With Manuscript 3 we wanted to analyze which need categories can be empirically identified on behalf of the transgressed after an interpersonal conflict has taken place. We asked 478 participants to report online about an interpersonal conflict they had experienced in their lives. Afterwards they had to rate 109 items on the violation of needs due to the conflict. The 109 items about need violations were operationalized in accordance with common theoretical suggestions for categories of needs. Factorial analyses were the method of choice to extract reoccurring need categories. In addition we wanted to look at the relevance of the extracted need categories for conflict resolution. Thus, we also tested if the need categories mediate the relationship between the severity of the experienced transgression and the desire for revenge.

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# MANUSCRIPTS

**2. Manuscript 1:**

**Apologies: Words of Magic?**

**The Role of Verbal Components, Anger Reduction, and Offence Severity**

Johanna Kirchhoff, Ulrich Wagner, & Micha Strack (2012)

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## **Apologies: Words of Magic? The Role of Verbal Components, Anger Reduction, and Offence Severity**

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Across various disciplines apologies are discussed as an instrument of conflict transformation. Questions regarding “how” and “why” apologies contribute to resolving conflicts need to be illuminated further. These questions are addressed in two experimental vignette studies in Germany. Study 1 supports the idea that the inclusion of more verbal components in an apology increases forgiveness, especially after a more severe offence. The study also reveals that the relationship between the completeness of apology and forgiveness is mediated by anger reduction. Study 2 demonstrates that for a more severe offence four components of apology are particularly relevant, namely conveying emotions, admitting fault, a statement of apology such as “I apologize,” and an attempt at explanation. Implications for conflict transformation and further scholarly inquiries are discussed.

*Keywords:* apologies, accounts, offence severity, anger

### **INTRODUCTION**

“I apologize!” How often has one heard or spoken these words? In day-to-day life, reading the newspaper and watching the news, one comes across various reports of apologies after human misdemeanors. The situations in which apologies are given can be found in personal and public settings. Consequently, apologies are a topic of great interest, and their potential to change relationships makes them a particularly fascinating area of study. The act of offering an apology can be seen as an interactive skill. This skill is the ability to handle a conflict and to restore relationships after a conflict situation (Alter, 1999; Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Petrucci, 2002; Weiner, Graham, Peter, & Zmuidinas, 1991). An apology is often elucidated as a prelude to forgiveness and reconciliation (Müller-Fahrenholz, 2003, p. 173; Tavuchis, 1991, p. 22; Vines, 2007). Sometimes apologies are

even described as constituting the heart of a reconciliatory process (Alter, 1999).

Yet, the relationship between apology and forgiveness is also the subject of critical discussion. Academic literature challenges mainly the often anticipated deterministic relationship of apology and forgiveness — namely the assumption that an apology has to be followed by forgiveness — which can have negative consequences for the victimized (e.g., Allan, Allan, Kaminer, & Stein, 2006; Smith, 2008, pp. 132–139). Some might even refuse an apology in general because they do not believe in the benefits of an apology at all (Claes & Clifton, 1998). Nevertheless, it is more common that an apology from the harmdoer is of great importance to victims (De Cremer, Pillutla, & Folmer, 2011). Despite a strong desire for an apology, the recipient of the apology is often not satisfied with the

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spoken words (De Cremer et al., 2011; Zechmeister, Garcia, Romero, & Vas, 2004), resulting in rejection of the apology. What, then, constitutes an acceptable apology? *How* and *why* can an apology be effective, accepted, and pave the way to forgiveness and even to reconciliation?

For a long while, apologies have been of interest to researchers in several scholarly disciplines and have been referred to as accounts (Meier, 1998). The classical definition of an account is given by Scott and Lyman (1968) who define an account as “a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior” (p. 46). Nevertheless, several typologies of accounts have been developed. Some include apologies as accounts (Schönbach, 1980), others do not (Schlenker, 1980; Scott & Lyman, 1968; Semin & Manstead, 1983; Sykes & Matza, 1957; Tedeschi & Reiss, 1981); and others explicitly separate apologies from accounts (Goffman, 1971; Tavuchis, 1991). Merging several account theories, Itoi, Obuchi, and Fukuno (1996) developed an account typology that differentiates among apologies, excuses, justifications, and denials.

Many scholars researching the effectiveness of apologies compared apologies with other accounts or no apology at all (e.g., Bennett & Earwaker, 1994; Ferrin, Kim, Cooper, & Dirks, 2007; Frantz & Bennis, 2005; Fukuno & Ohbuchi, 1998; Risen & Gilovich, 2007; Takaku, Weiner, & Ohbuchi, 2001). Questions in this context concern, for example, whether an apology is more effective than excuses or denials that follow a transgression (e.g., Fukuno & Ohbuchi, 1998). This approach does not allow insights

into the verbal composition of an apology nor the question of *how* an apology can be effective (cf. De Cremer & Schouten, 2008; Fehr & Gelfand, 2010). In the relevant literature we found only a handful of experimental studies that explicitly look at apologies in terms of their components. However, these studies reveal that the success or failure of an apology depends on its composition (Anderson, Linden, & Habra, 2006; Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Fehr & Gelfand, 2010; Robbenolt, 2003, Study A; Scher & Darley, 1997; Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Förster, & Montada, 2004).

The suggestions regarding the number and type of verbal components of an apology differ across researchers and disciplines (e.g., Fehr & Gelfand, 2010; Harris, Grainger, & Mullany, 2006; Meier, 1998). Kirchhoff, Strack, and Jäger (2009) conducted a comprehensive literature review in the area of jurisprudential scholarship, sociolinguistics, sociology, theology, philosophy and psychology. They qualitatively analyzed 39 studies published between 1971 and 2008. Their examination of the various suggestions for elementary components of apologies identified 10 basic components of apology as recurring in the literature. First of all, they identified statements such as “I apologize” as an illocutionary force-indicating device (IFID), a term introduced by Searle (1969) and coined by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (e.g., 1984). The IFID indicates that the phrase is meant to be a realization of an apology. Throughout this article we refer to the IFID as a “statement of apology (IFID).” Other components include the following: the naming of the offence (saying what one is apologizing for), taking responsibility, attempting to explain the offence (without

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an external attribution, because it would then be an excuse by definition; cf. Scott & Lyman, 1968), conveying emotions (such as shame and regret), addressing emotions and/or damage of the other, admitting fault, promising forbearance (saying that one will not repeat the offence), offering reparation, and a request for acceptance of the apology. This componential approach is unique in the sense that it extends beyond the common conceptualization of an apology as merely a sympathetic statement (Smith, 2008), but also integrates more objective and concrete aspects of a reconciliatory approach such as reparation (Auerbach, 2009). Table 1 gives an overview of the verbal components introduced by Kirchhoff et al. (2009).

In addition, most of the research on apologies has focused on apologies after minor offences (e.g., Fukuno & Ohbuchi, 1998; Risen & Gilovich, 2007) despite the fact that apologies seem to be especially desired after severe offences (cf. Coicaud & Jönsson, 2008; Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989). It seems apparent that the question of what constitutes an acceptable apology is also relevant after severe transgressions. For example, Allan et al. (2006) found that after human rights violations people tend to forgive more easily if the perpetrator apologized with “true sorrow.” But what is “true sorrow”? How does the apology after severe harm have to be phrased to be perceived as an utterance of someone who is truly sorry? And do suggestions for the elementary composition of an apology suggested in the literature apply to offences of varying severity?

Fehr and Gelfand (2010) searched for the underlying mechanism which would not only explain how apologies can be effective but also *why* this would be the

case. They proposed that the correspondence between the apology’s composition and the self-concept of its receiver is highly relevant. The authors show, for example, that people with self-concepts that are highly focused on independence attach great importance to offers of reparation within an apology. We acknowledge that individual matches of personality and apology compositions can be relevant, yet we propose that the search for an underlying mechanism other than stable trait-variables is worthwhile.

We assume this because speech acts “contain a degree of consistency which is not purely individual but culturally and socially defined” (Harris et al., 2006, p. 720; cf. also Meier, 1998 and Scher & Darley, 1997). Hence, we want to scrutinize a state-variable for identifying a mechanism that could explain why an apology is effective. We propose that this mechanism might be grounded in the apology’s capacity to reduce the negative emotions elicited by the offence for which the apology is offered.

To date, research analyzing the relationship between apologies and negative emotions has focused on measuring the effectiveness of an apology by using, for example, anger reduction as an indicator (Anderson et al., 2006; Bennett & Earwaker, 1994; Hareli & Eisikovits, 2006; Schmitt et al., 2004). This has been done without simultaneously considering the apology’s effect on forgiveness or reconciliation. Such consideration would allow for testing of whether the reduction of anger mediates the relationship between the utterance of an apology and forgiveness. Nevertheless, studies show that the reduction of negative emotions can serve as a mediator between concepts such as ruminating over

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an offence as well as perspective taking and forgiveness (McCullough, Bono, & Root, 2007; Takaku, 2001). The calming of emotions may also explain the relationship between apologies and forgiveness.

In conclusion, questions on “how” and “why” apologies can contribute to resolving conflicts have to be further clarified (Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Meier, 1998). The two studies in this article directly address these questions. To address the how-question we want to analyze whether the inclusion of more verbal components in an apology increases the likelihood that its receiver would forgive, particularly after more severe offences. By analyzing whether the reduction of anger can explain the relationship between the completeness of apology and forgiveness we want to scrutinize the why-question.

### STUDY 1

#### Theoretical Background

Previous studies have revealed that apologies can enhance forgiveness (Allan et al., 2006; Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Gunderson & Ferrari, 2008; Weiner et al., 1991). In the introduction we suggested that an apology can be highly desired but may not be accepted when it is offered. How can this be explained? Let us assume that one person is insulted in an offence. Two different apologies could be offered: one that includes more content and one that includes less. It can be expected that the more complete an apology is, the more effective it is. This is simply because the apology offers more information that the receiver wants to hear. Further, it can be assumed that the effectiveness of the apology can be explained by the fact that a more complete apology reduces more of

the anger that the person holds toward the offender. Smith (2008, p. 29), for example, elaborates that it is not enough for a person to simply hear that someone is sorry; the person also wants to hear what the other is apologizing for. It can also be expected that these assumptions differ regarding offences that vary in severity. After a minor offence, the person is very likely to perceive the apology as already complete when it includes less information. If you bump into someone on the street, for example, and offer him a lengthy apology, he would probably be very annoyed and vanish before you had even finished. Following more serious offences, especially after very severe offences, we assume that probably only a complete apology would be more effective and increase the possibility of forgiveness.

It has been proven in prior studies that the composition of an apology indeed affects the perception and reaction of the offended in that a more elaborate apology is more effective (Anderson et al., 2006; Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Robbennolt, 2003, Study A; Scher & Darley, 1997). However, none of these studies have scrutinized all 10 basic components of apology identified by Kirchhoff et al. (2009, cf. Table 1). In addition, most experimental studies consider effects of apologies on reconciliatory behavior after offences that are not very severe. Offences include situations in which coffee has been spilled (Fukuno & Ohbuchi, 1998) or someone is talking on the phone while the other one wants to concentrate (Risen & Gilovich, 2007). That severity does have an influence on conflict behavior is supported by several authors (Smith, 2008, p. 11; Goffman, 1971, p. 116; Kuha, 2003; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002). Bennett and Earwaker (1994), for

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example, found in their study that higher offence severity is associated with a higher reluctance to forgive. In a theoretical analysis, Benoit (1995) also writes that accounts (such as apologies and excuses) after less severe offences are more likely to be accepted. He continues by suggesting that the given account is acceptable when it "outweighs the offence" (p. 43). Similarly, Ohbuchi, Kameda, and Agarie (1989) suggest that, particularly after more severe offences, more elaborate apologies may be needed. Thus, one of the leading interests of this article is to analyze the effectiveness of the apology's completeness depending on offence severity.

**Hypothesis 1.1:** An apology that includes more of the 10 basic components of an apology encourages more forgiveness, especially after a more severe offence, than an apology including fewer of these components.

Concerning the hypothesis H1.1, it is assumed that the effectiveness of an apology primarily depends on the completeness of information conveyed. The present study also wants to identify a more complex mechanism that can explain the effect of apologies on forgiveness. We think that a good starting point is to look at the interrelationship of apology, forgiveness, and emotions. Scobie and Scobie (1998) review several conceptions of forgiveness and conclude that forgiveness is commonly understood as a change in a negative emotional state, such as the reduction of anger, resentment, or anxiety. It can be shown that anger, in particular, correlates negatively with forgiveness (Tam et al., 2007). From their studies on emotional dis-

closure of offended toward offenders, Harber and Wenberg (2005) point out that forgiveness is a sequential process: reduced anger precedes forgiveness. The authors therefore promote interventions that facilitate the reduction of anger (such as writing an angry letter) after one has been offended. We assume that one of these interventions can be an apology on behalf of the offender. Previous studies have already supported the effect of apologies on anger-based emotions (Anderson et al., 2006; Bennett & Earwaker, 1994). Nevertheless, they have not simultaneously tested the effects of the apology on forgiveness. If an apology indeed reduces feelings of anger and this again enhances forgiveness, analyzing the reduction of anger-based emotions as a mediator between the completeness of an apology and the likelihood of forgiveness seems plausible. To the knowledge of the authors, this is the first study that analyzes this particular mediation.

**Hypothesis 1.2:** The influence of the apology's completeness on forgiveness is mediated by anger reduction.

## Method

**Design and procedure.** Study 1 was designed as an online vignette study. Participants were welcomed and asked three demographic questions: age, gender, and educational background. Afterwards the severity manipulation (two levels) was introduced with a short description of a more or a less severe neighborhood conflict. The participants were asked to put themselves in the position of the offended person. On the next page the severity manipulation (one item) was tested. Next,



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the second independent measure, the completeness of the apology (five levels), was displayed. Thus, we used a 2 (severity of transgression) 5 (completeness of apology) between-subjects design. The program randomly assigned participants to one of the 10 conditions. After answering items on the tendency to forgive (five items), the reduction of the anger-based emotions (two items) was rated. On the second to last page, the given apology was again displayed. The participants were asked to rate how much they felt each of the 10 components of apology (10 items) was lacking and how important each of the components is to them (10 items). The questionnaire ended with 14 items on religiousness and personal irreconcilability. A space was also offered for open comments on the questionnaire or apologies in general. All measures are explicitly described in the following sections.

#### Independent measures

**Offence severity.** The severity of the offence was varied in two versions. In both scenarios the participant was asked to imagine living in a rental home. On her/his floor s/he has one direct neighbor. They have known each other for a year and so far everything has been fine. They always greet each other in a friendly manner. In the less severe condition, the participant was told that during the last week s/he had a small dispute with the neighbor. In the more severe condition, the dispute was an intense conflict, which had escalated. In both conditions, they were told that they met the neighbor by coincidence in the hallway and he, without any reason, complained about him/her having made too much noise lately. The less severe scenario stated that the neighbor affronted her/him in a dispute. While doing so, he also

grabbed his/her arm. When asked, the neighbor let go. In the more severe scenario, the neighbor yelled and harshly affronted the person in a conflict. He aggressively grabbed his/her arm and pushed her/him. When asked to let go, the neighbor did not do so and grabbed even tighter. In both conditions, the scenario ended with the statement that because the incident s/he and the neighbor had been avoiding each other lately (cf. Appendix A). For the manipulation check, we asked the participants to rate "How severe did you perceive that what has happened to be?" on a five-point scale (with 5 being the most severe).

**Completeness of apology.** The manipulation of the independent measure "completeness of apology" was introduced with "Please imagine that the neighbor contacted you yesterday and said that he wanted to come over to talk to you. Because of this you invited the neighbor to come over today." The completeness of apology could be varied manifold as there are 10 core components of apology. Of special interest was the combination of all 10 components introduced by Kirchhoff et al. (2009, cf. Table 1) in comparison with combinations that were less complete. In addition to the complete apology, four further combinations were operationalized: One with a single component, another with four components, and two with five components.

Several authors define the statement of apology (IFID), such as "I apologize," as an apology, despite its perfunctory character (cf. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Schlenker & Darby, 1981; Smith, 2008, p. 74; Vines, 2007). Therefore this component was tested singularly.

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The four-component apology included the statement of apology (IFID) and three further components. One of these three components was naming the offence, because otherwise the receiver does not know what the other is apologizing for (Lazare, 2004, p. 77; Smith, 2008, p. 28). Another was taking responsibility as this differentiates an apology from other accounts such as denials or excuses (Fukuno & Ohbuchi, 1998; Goffman, 1971, pp. 108–113; Tavuchis, 1991, pp. 17–19). The third component was an acceptance request because it has been shown in previous research to have an effect only if added to other components (Schmitt et al., 2004).

To get a sense of the effect of adding one of the remaining six components to an apology, two combinations of five components were tested by adding one component to the four-component apology. These components were conveying emotions and admitting fault. Some authors refer to these two components as having the most importance (e.g., Exline, Deshea, & Holeman, 2007). Also, these two components have already been proven as equally important (Scher & Darley, 1997). The operationalization of the five apologies is displayed in Table 2.

Hypothesis H1.1 assumes that a more complete apology is more acceptable because it offers more information. Hence the effects on the receiver of the apology are expected to be the highest for the complete apology (10 components) and lowest for the one-component apology — at least in the more severe condition. Similarly, the two five-component apologies are expected to be equally effective and more effective than the one- and the four-component apology but less effective than the complete one.

The manipulation check of the independent variable “completeness of apology” was more complex. To evaluate whether indeed the particular phrasing of the apology produces the observable effect, it was important to compare the respondent’s subjective account of the content of the apology with the intended one. This is necessary because it is possible that the receiver of the apology may infer presence of components from the given apology that were not given explicitly (cf. Schmitt et al., 2004). In our study we therefore compared how much the participants considered the particular components to be missing when they were part of the apology to when they were not. We did this to test whether they perceived each component as it was intended. The list of elementary components was introduced with “Can you rate how much you missed each of the following components in the given apology?”. The participants rated each component on a five-point scale ranging from 1, not missed, at all to 5, missed a lot. When a component is rated as missing more when it is not present compared with when it is present, we can conclude that the intended meaning corresponded with the subjective one.

### Dependent measures

**Forgiveness.** The effectiveness of the apologies depending on offence severity was evaluated by the likelihood to forgive. Five items from previous studies were chosen for the forgiveness scale. The first two items concern whether the person forgives the offender – “I forgive the neighbor” (e.g., Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Fukuno & Ohbuchi, 1998) but also if the apology is accepted – “I accept the apology.” The latter is important.

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Despite having forgiveness as its ultimate goal, the receiver of an apology can accept the apologetic utterance but is in no way required to forgive the offender (Allan et al., 2006; Byrne, 2004; Takaku et al., 2001; Weiner et al., 1991). Following Bolkan and Daly (2009), two items asked whether the apology was perceived as adequate as well as sincere – “I perceive the apology to be [adequate/sincere]” (cf. also Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Scher & Darley, 1997). That is reasonable because researchers emphasize that an apology has to be perceived as sincere to be accepted (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Schmitt et al., 2004; Takaku et al., 2001). The fifth item asked whether enough information was included in the apology – “The neighbor included everything in the apology that I wanted to hear from him.” See Table 3 for an overview on the items in the forgiveness scale.

**Anger reduction.** Concerning the potential mediator “anger reduction,” two items asked whether the apology reduced anger and rage – “Due to the apology my [anger/rage] has been reduced.”

All dependent measures used a five-point response scale ranging from does not apply at all (1) to totally applies (5).

**Control variables.** There are variables besides the direct effect of the speech act that influence people’s reaction in conflict such as reconciliatory behavior including forgiveness. Contextual variables, including the effects of culture (Alter, 1999; Takaku et al., 2001; Vines, 2007), relationship closeness between offender and offended (Dixon, Tredoux, Durrheim, & Foster, 1994; Fukuno & Ohbuchi, 1998), the level of interaction that can be public or

private (Griswold, 2007; Kampf, 2008) as well as interpersonal or between groups (Philpot & Hornsey, 2008), and the timing of apology (Frantz & Bennis, 2005; Risen & Gilovich, 2007) were considered. These variables were kept constant, as the study was conducted with German-speaking participants (culture) and included a private, interpersonal conflict (level of interaction) with a neighbor (relationship closeness), who offers an apology one week after the offence (timing of apology). Other variables that might influence reconciliatory behavior are gender (Allan et al., 2006; Gunderson & Ferrari, 2008) and age (Mullet, Houdbine, Laumonier, & Girard, 1998), which were surveyed on the first page of the questionnaire. Further variables are religiosity (Barnes & Brown, 2010; Lawler-Row, 2010), general forgivingness (Brown, 2003), and irreconcilability such as trait revenge or trait avoidance (Allan et al., 2006; Schmitt et al., 2004). These latter variables were controlled for by items on the last page of the questionnaire, which are described in the next paragraph.

The single item measures on religiosity (“Are you a religious person?”) and general forgivingness (“Are you someone who can easily forgive”) were surveyed involving five-point ratings ranging from does not apply (1) at all to totally applies (5). Personal irreconcilability was assessed by 12 items that differentiate trait avoidance (seven items) and trait revenge (five items) motivations drawing from the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) by McCullough et al. (1998) in its German translation by Werner and Appel (2003). An example item for avoidance motivations is “If a person angered or hurt you, are you

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then a person who avoids that person?" A item from the measurement of revenge motivation is for example "If a person angered or hurt you are you then a person who will make that person pay?" (cf. Appendix B; 5-point rating scale with 5 = totally applies).

**Importance of components.** On the last page of the questionnaire we asked the participants to rate each of the 10 components of apology, which were displayed in a list. They were asked to rate how important each component of the apology is to them by again using a five-point scale (1, not important at all, to 5, very important).

**Participants.** Out of 240 people who participated in the survey, 192 had complete data sets and were considered for the analyses. Based on statements suggesting misinterpretation of items in the open-comments section, two further participants were excluded from the sample ( $n = 190$ ). The attrition rate did not differ between the 10 conditions according to a chi-square test that compared the number of dropouts with the number of participants who remained in the study across conditions,  $\chi^2(9, 240) = 4.83$ ;  $p = .85$ . The majority of participants had a high educational background (178 people at least had Abitur, which is equivalent to college admissions in the United States). The majority ( $n = 154$ ) were females. On average people were 26 years old (standard deviation  $SD = 8.24$ ), ranging from 16 to 63 years. Because age (severity:  $r = -.05$ ,  $p = .50$ ; apology  $r = .03$ ,  $p = .73$ ), religiosity (severity:  $r = .08$ ,  $p = .31$ ; apology:  $r = -.07$ ,  $p = .36$ ), trait forgivingness (severity:  $r = .02$ ,  $p$

$= .83$ ; apology:  $r = -.01$ ,  $p = .92$ ), and trait avoidance (severity:  $r = -.02$ ,  $p = .80$ ; apology:  $r = -.01$ ,  $p = .93$ ) did not correlate with the independent measures, they were dropped from further analyses. Gender (severity:  $r = -.17$ ,  $p = .02$ ; apology  $r = .01$ ,  $p = .85$ ,  $n = 190$ ) and trait revenge (severity:  $r = .19$ ,  $p = .01$ ; apology:  $r = -.03$ ,  $p = .67$ ,  $n = 181$ ) did correlate with the independent measure severity and were therefore considered as covariates in the analyses.

## Results

The manipulation of both offence severity and completeness of apology was successful. Participants rated the severity of the severe offence higher ( $M_s = 4.41$ ,  $SD = .70$ ) than of the less severe scenario ( $M_s = 3.84$ ,  $SD = .80$ ). This difference was significant ( $t(188) = -5.18$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ). The components of apology were perceived as they were construed. Across all apology components,  $t$ -Tests revealed that when a component was present in the displayed text, it was not as missed as when it was not part of the apology. This supports that the subjective accounts corresponded to the intended ones (cf. Table 4).

The forgiveness-scale (cf. Table 3) used to evaluate the success of the different apologies showed high internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .80$ ). The two items measuring the reduction of anger after the utterance of the apology were also aggregated ( $\alpha = .76$ ). The internal consistencies of the five items on revenge motivation ( $\alpha = .82$ ) as well as the seven items on avoidance motivation ( $\alpha = .86$ ) were high.

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**Testing H1.1.** The first hypothesis H1.1 proposed that a more complete apology encourages more forgiveness particularly if offence severity is high. As expected, no difference in effects on forgiveness were found for the two apologies containing five components in both the less severe ( $t(41) = -.79, p = .44, M_{5a} = 4.15, M_{5b} = 4.30$ ) and the more severe condition ( $t(29) = .36, p = .72, M_{5a} = 4.07, M_{5b} = 3.97$ ).

Hereinafter they were combined. An ANCOVA with gender and trait revenge as covariates partly supports the H1.1. Significant effects were found for both main effects (severity:  $F(1, 171) = 4.20, p = .04, \eta^2 = .02$ ; completeness of apology:  $F(3, 171) = 7.77, p < .01, \eta^2 = .12$ )<sup>1</sup>. The interaction of severity and completeness of apology however did not reach significance ( $F(3, 171) = .62, p = .60, \eta^2 = .01$ ). The covariates also did not reach significance (gender:  $F(1, 171) = .21, p = .65, \eta^2 < .01$ ; revenge:  $F(1, 171) = .14, p = .71, \eta^2 < .01$ ). As Simmons, Nelson & Simonsohn (2011) suggest that “(i)f an analysis includes a covariate, authors must report the statistical results of the analysis without the covariate” (p. 1363), we did so. The ANOVA without taking into account the covariates did not change the result. Both main effects hold (severity:  $F(1, 182) = 5.46, p = .02, \eta^2 = .03$ ; completeness of apology:  $F(3, 182) = 8.28, p < .01, \eta^2 = .12$ ), and the interaction of severity and completeness of apology did not reach significance ( $F(3, 182) = .82, p = .64, \eta^2 = .01$ ). Hence we dropped the covariates from further analysis. The results of the ANOVA are depicted in Figure 1.

<sup>1</sup> For the interpretation of the effect size eta-squared ( $\eta^2$ ) the standard conception of Cohen (1988) is applied throughout the paper (.01 = small, .06 = medium, and .14 = large).

That the interaction of the apology's completeness and severity was nonsignificant suggests that the effect of the elemental composition does not differ in the two severity conditions contradictory to the prediction of H1.1, which assumed that it is particularly important for the apology to be complete in the more severe condition. On the other hand, the pattern of means suggests that, for example, the difference between the five-component and the 10-component apology is greater in the more severe than in the less severe condition (cf. Table 5). Planned contrasts analysis included in the ANOVA further revealed that in line with the H1.1, in the less severe condition, for the comparison of more complete combinations with the next less complete one, only the difference between the one- and four-component apologies ( $p = .10$ ) was marginally significant while the other two were not ( $p_{45} = .56, p_{5c} = .39$ ). Regarding the high severity condition, the comparison between the one-component and the four-component apology ( $p = .20$ ) and the one between the four-component and the five-component apology ( $p = .21$ ) did not reach significance, whereas the comparison between the five-component and the 10-component apology ( $p = .11$ ) was closer to reaching significance. This does not support H1.1 substantially, but slightly, as the completeness of apology in particular seems to have an effect in the more severe condition.

**Testing H1.2.** The second hypothesis H1.2 expected the effects of the completeness of apology on forgiveness to be mediated by anger reduction. Because the variable completeness of apology was categorical, it was contrast-coded for the mediation analysis (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2002,

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pp. 332–341; Eid, Gollwitzer, & Schmitt, 2010, pp. 651–654). The simple contrasts were designed so that the one-component apology was contrasted with the four-component apology (coding - 1 and 1), the four-component with the five-component apology (coding - 1 and 1) and the five-component with the 10-component apology (coding - 1 and 1). In addition, we designed two further contrasts: one comparing the one-component and the 10-component apology (coding - 1 and 1), which is called “extreme” contrast in the following, and the second one contrasting the one- and the four-component apology (coding each with - 0.5) with the five- and 10-component apology (coding each with 0.5), which is called “less and more complete” contrast.

The bivariate correlations of the measures were suitable for mediation analysis only concerning the “extreme” and the “less and more complete” apology contrast in the more severe condition (cf. Table 6). For all other contrasts in the more severe condition as well as all contrasts in the less severe condition, the correlations did not allow for mediation analysis because either the completeness of apology did not affect anger reduction and/or the latter did not affect forgiveness (cf. Baron & Kenny, 1986). The mediation analyses with the two relevant contrasts in the more severe condition were computed with MPlus 6 (Muthen & Muthen, 2010).

At first, because of the high correlation of anger and forgiveness (cf. Table 6), we tested whether the two constructs could be separated. We did so by applying confirmatory factor analyses with MPlus 6 (Muthen & Muthen, 2010). The fit indices of the two- and the one-factor model are displayed in Table 7. The chi-square-

difference is significant and supports considering anger reduction and forgiveness as two separate constructs rather than a single one ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 10.07$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .01$ ).

Second, we ran mediation analyses. Results showed that in the severe condition for the “extreme contrast,” the completeness of the apology had a positive effect on reducing anger ( $\beta = .21$ ,  $p \leq .04$ ) and anger reduction positively affected forgiveness ( $\beta = .59$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). According to Christ and Schlüter (2012), anger reduction can be interpreted as a mediator in this sequence because the indirect effect, tested with confidence intervals by applying bias corrected bootstrapping, does not include zero. The values for the 95% CI lie within the range from .04 to .22. The same result occurred for the analysis including the “less and more complete” contrast in the more severe condition. Here the completeness of the apology significantly affected anger reduction ( $\beta = .31$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ), and the latter significantly affected forgiveness ( $\beta = .60$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). The values for the 95% CI [.10, .27] did not include zero. Consequently, anger reduction can be interpreted as a mediator for the relationship between the apology’s completeness and forgiveness when the apology’s completeness is contrasted so that the less and the more complete apologies are compared. The path models of the mediation analysis are displayed in Figure 2a and 2b.

**Information on the importance of components.** The importance ratings for each component did not significantly differ between the two severity conditions; hence, we calculated the importance ratings for the whole sample. The means for the importance ratings of the components ranged from 2.16 ( $SD = 1.09$ ) for the

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component, offering reparation, to 3.89 ( $SD = 1.33$ ) for the component showing emotions. All ratings are displayed in Table 8. Planned contrast analyses, which compared each component's importance to the importance of all other components, revealed that the statement of apology (IFID) was rated significantly more important than all other components together,  $t(1820) = 3.49, p \leq .01$ . The same applied for conveying emotions,  $t(1820) = 5.36, p \leq .01$ , the attempt at explanation,  $t(1820) = 3.26, p \leq .01$ , and the admission of fault,  $t(1820) = 4.34, p \leq .01$ . The offer of reparation,  $t(1820) = -12.51, p \leq .01$ , and the acceptance request,  $t(1820) = -5.05, p \leq .01$  were rated as significantly less important compared to the other components.

### Discussion

The results of Study 1 offer some support for the hypothesis that more complete apologies encourage more forgiveness than do less complete apologies. In the low severity condition, only the comparison of the effects of the one-component and the four-component apology on forgiveness is marginally significant, suggesting that the more complete apologies do not differ in their effectiveness. In the high severity condition only the differences between the five-component and the complete apology approaches significance, offering some support for the idea that after more severe offences, it is particularly important that the apology includes more components.

Looking at the two tested levels of severity, the difference between these two levels regarding the dependent variable, forgiveness, is not as large as one might have expected. This might stem from the fact

that the two scenarios were both quite severe. In both scenarios, the participants were asked to view the situation from the perspective of a person who was yelled at and confronted with unwanted physical contact by an offender.

Concerning the more severe scenario, anger reduction partly explains the relationship between the composition of apology and forgiveness when contrasting the least complete (one component) and most complete (10 components) apology. The same applies when contrasting the less complete (one and four components) with the more complete (five and 10 components) apologies. Hence, the present study seems to support the idea that apologies contribute to forgiveness because they reduce anger, though this depends on the completeness of the apology. In line with this finding, studies related to the fields of research on apologies support the idea that the reduction of negative emotions can serve as a mediator between concepts, such as perspective taking and forgiveness (Takaku, 2001). Nevertheless, the results for the mediation analysis need to be interpreted cautiously because the emotion and the forgiveness items were asked at the same time. It is also possible that the apology affects forgiveness, and this in turn affects the reduction of emotional distress. Longitudinal data would be helpful to support these results.

As was revealed in this study, the 10 components are not perceived as equally important, and some were rated as significantly less important than others. Does this mean that some of the components are not important at all? To shed light on this question we conducted Study 2.

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## STUDY 2

### Theoretical Background

Possible components of apology are not of equal importance. As was revealed in Study 1, the expression of emotions, the admission of fault, the statement of apology (IFID), an attempt at explanation, and promising forbearance are rated as the five most important components. The first four are rated as significantly more important compared with all other ones. Several researchers of apologies have argued similarly, contending that the statement of apology (IFID) and taking responsibility are components that must accompany an apology, whereas others take a more context-specific stance (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Harris et al., 2006). There is, however, empirical support that, for example, the statement of apology (IFID), taking responsibility, a promise of forbearance, and an offer of repair have approximately the same potential to enhance forgiveness and are therefore roughly of similar importance (Scher & Darley, 1997). Nevertheless, in another empirical test, Schmitt et al. (2004) supported the theoretical assumption of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) that only some components have to accompany an apology. Schmitt et al. (2004) demonstrated that the acceptance request only has an effect if added to other components, but it is unclear whether the empirical argument of Schmitt et al. (2004) holds because their operationalization is not distinct enough; their approach does not clearly separate the statement of apology (IFID) from the acceptance request. For the latter, they use the phrase "I wish you could forgive me. I apologize for what I have done" (p. 469).

In addition, none of the reported studies experimentally scrutinized all 10 basic components of apology described by Kirchhoff et al. (2009, cf. Table 1).

To gain insights into the question of whether the components of apology that are rated as less important actually have an effect if added to an apology, we conducted Study 2. It was tested whether an apology composed of more of the 10 basic components is more effective than an apology composed of fewer components but includes those identified as more important in Study 1.

The completeness of an apology is suggested to be particularly important after more severe offences (Benoit, 1995, p. 43; Ohbuchi et al., 1989). Accordingly, Study 2 examined the introduced components in the context of the more severe scenario operationalized in Study 1 (cf. Appendix A). As in Study 1, we propose that anger reduction might explain the relationship between the completeness of apology and forgiveness (Anderson et al., 2006; Bennett & Earwaker, 1994; Tam et al., 2007).

**Hypothesis 2.1:** After a more severe offence all 10 basic components of an apology are more effective than apologies containing the five components rated as most important, which is more effective than an apology containing the four components rated as most important, which is more effective than an apology containing the one component rated as most important.

**Hypothesis 2.2:** The influence of the apology's completeness on forgiveness is mediated by anger reduction.



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**Method**

Study 2 was designed as an online vignette study, too. The structure of the study was similar to the one chosen for Study 1. The changes in the independent and the dependent measures are reported below.

**Independent measures.** For “offence severity,” the variation was dropped and we only surveyed the more severe offence (Appendix A). The independent measure “completeness of apology” was manipulated in four steps in accordance with the ratings of the relative importance of each of the 10 components in Study 1 (cf. Table 8). One apology contained only the component that was rated as the most important. The second and third apology encompassed the four and the five components rated as most important. These are the conveyance of emotions, the admission of fault, the statement of apology (IFID), an attempt at explanation, and promising forbearance. A fourth apology contained all 10 components. These combinations are displayed in Table 9. The program randomly assigned participants to one of the four conditions.

**Dependent measure.** The dependent measures were the same as in Study 1 with the exception that participants did not have to state how much they missed each component, because Study 1 had sufficiently shown that the intended wording of the components corresponded with the subjective accounts of the components.

**Participants.** Of 107 participants, 88 participants were included in the data set; the remaining 19 participants did not complete the relevant dependent measures. The attrition rate did not differ between the four conditions according to a chi-square test that compared the number of dropouts with

the number of participants that stayed in the study across conditions ( $\chi^2(3, 107) = 2.72; p = .44$ ). Most participants had a high educational background (71 had Abitur, which is equivalent to college admissions in the United States). The majority of participants were female (58 females, 26 males, 4 missing information). On average people were 32 years old ( $SD = 13.15$ ), ranging from 19 to 72 years. Because age ( $r = -.18, p = .09$ ), religiosity ( $r = .04, p = .75$ ), general forgivingness ( $r = .18, p = .14$ ), and trait avoidance ( $r = -.08, p = .51$ ) did not correlate with the independent measure, they were excluded from the further analysis. Gender ( $r = -.23, p = .04$ ) and trait revenge ( $r = -.23, p = .06, n = 67$ ) correlated with the independent measure. Hence, these latter variables were considered as covariates in the following analysis. Because of the loss of cases on behalf of the variable trait revenge, we imputed the missing values by the mean of the sample.

**Results**

The forgiveness scale with the five items (cf. Table 3) was used to evaluate the success of the different apologies and showed good internal consistency (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .87$ ). The two items that measured anger reduction after the utterance of the apology were also aggregated ( $\alpha = .84$ ). The internal consistency of the five items on revenge motivation ( $\alpha = .84$ ) as well as the seven items on avoidance motivation ( $\alpha = .77$ ) by McCullough et al. (1998; for the items see Appendix B) was high. Yet, a factor analysis of the 12 items on revenge and avoidance motivation revealed that the item “If a person angered or hurt you, are you then a person who lives as if that person doesn’t

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exist, isn't around?" loaded low and on both factors (revenge:  $r = .21$ ; avoidance:  $r = .19$ ). Thus, we excluded this item from the original avoidance scale. This raised the Cronbach's alpha of that scale to .81.

**Testing H2.1.** Hypothesis H2.1 proposed that an apology composed of more of the 10 basic components is still more effective than an apology composed of fewer components, but those identified as more important in Study 1. An ANCOVA with gender and trait revenge as covariates revealed a significant effect for the independent measure completeness of apology ( $F(3, 82) = 2.70, p = .05, \eta^2 = .09$ ). Both covariates did not reach significance (gender:  $F(1, 82) = 1.08, p = .30, \eta^2 = .01$ ; revenge:  $F(1, 82) = 2.47, p = .12, \eta^2 = .03$ ). The ANOVA, without taking into account the covariates, did not change the result. A significant effect was revealed for the independent measure completeness of apology ( $F(3, 84) = 2.87, p = .04, \eta^2 = .09$ ). Hence, we dropped the covariates from further analyses.

The results for the ANOVA are depicted in Figure 3. The pattern of means suggested differences in the effects of the completeness of apology on forgiveness, particularly for the comparison between the one-component and the four-component apologies (cf. Table 10). Planned contrast analysis included in the ANOVA revealed that the comparison of each combination with the next less complete apology was significant regarding the comparison between the one-component and the four-component apology,  $t(84) = 2.35, p = .02$ , but not in the case of the other comparisons (4 vs. 5:  $t(84) = .26, p = .80$ , 5 vs. 10:  $t(84) = -.62, p = .54$ ). The difference between the one-component and the

complete apology was also significant ( $t(84) = 2.05, p = .04$ ). Accordingly, H2.1 is partly supported.

**Testing H2.2.** With hypothesis H2.2 we wanted to test — as we did in Study 1 — whether the relationship between the completeness of an apology and forgiveness is mediated by anger reduction. We applied the same contrast-coding of the variable completeness of apology as we did in Study 1. However, the bivariate correlations did not allow for scrutinizing anger reduction as a mediator because not a single one of the contrast variables significantly affected anger reduction (Baron & Kenny, 1986, cf. Table 11).

**Information on the importance of components.** The means of importance ratings for each component ranged from 2.44 ( $SD = 1.21$ ) for the component offering reparation to 4.48 ( $SD = .74$ ) for the component attempt at explanation. All results are displayed in Table 8. Planned contrast analysis comparing the importance of each component with the overall importance of the other components, revealed, in line with the findings of Study 1, that the statement of apology (IFID) is significantly rated as more important than all the other components,  $t(676) = 3.05, p < .01$ . The same is applicable to the conveyance of emotions,  $t(676) = 3.15, p < .01$ , the attempt at explanation,  $t(676) = 4.59, p < .01$ , and the admission of fault,  $t(676) = 4.09, p < .01$ . The components offer of reparation,  $t(676) = -13.31, p < .01$ , and the acceptance request,  $t(676) = -5.14, p < .01$ , are rated as being significantly less important compared with the other components. In contrast to Study 1, taking responsibility was also rated as significantly

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more important compared to all the other components,  $t(676) = 2.00, p = .05$ .

### Discussion

Study 2 compared apologies containing more of the 10 basic components with an apology that contains fewer components but included those identified in Study 1 as being more important. The apologies examined contained all 10 basic components of an apology, the five and the four components, or the one component rated as most important in Study 1. We determined that the comparison between the one-component and the four-component apology revealed a significantly different effect of these two apologies on the tendency of their receiver to forgive, with the four-component apology resulting in higher forgiveness. The importance ratings of the 10 components were very similar to the ones in Study 1, with showing emotions, admission of fault, the statement of apology (IFID), and an attempt at explanation being the most important components. The results can be interpreted as indicating that in the given context, the addition of the five verbal components promising forbearance, addressing emotions of the other, taking responsibility, naming the offence, an acceptance request, and an offer of repair do not contribute much to the effects on forgiveness. The result concerning the component taking responsibility is surprising, because researchers advocate that it must accompany an apology (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Harris et al., 2006; Itoi et al., 1996). One possible explanation for these contradictory results is that, in the given context, people infer from the component admitting fault that the person is taking

responsibility even though it is not explicitly stated. This does not suggest that in other contexts it is necessary to make this component explicit because admitting what happened was a mistake is not the same as explicitly saying that one was responsible for it.

Unlike the first study, Study 2 did not find anger reduction to be a mediator between the completeness of apology and forgiveness. The contrast coded apology variables did not have an effect on anger reduction. One possible explanation is that when the apology already includes the component that was rated as the most important, the other components do not add much to the reduction of anger on behalf of the participants. Comparing the results of Study 2 with those of Study 1 strengthens this finding.

In Study 1, the four most important components conveying emotions, admitting fault, the statement of apology (IFID), and an attempt at explanation were only included in the five component apologies and the complete apology (cf. Table 2). The results of Study 1 revealed that anger reduction only mediated the relationship between the completeness of apology and forgiveness if the apology variable was contrasted for the one-component and the 10-component apology and the one- and four-component versus the five-and 10-component apology in after the more severe offence (cf. Figure 2). In comparison with the results of Study 2, it can be assumed that, in particular, the component conveying emotions (one-component apology in Study 2) reduces anger, because the four-component apology does not increase anger reduction. That the four-component apology in Study 2 still increases the forgiveness-likelihood

compared with the one-component apology can be explained with the (in-)completeness of information that was offered.

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

**Summary of results.** How can an apology contribute to forgiveness? Study 1 illuminated that, particularly after more severe offences, it seems important for the apology to be more complete. This empirical finding is in line with theoretical assumptions by, for example, Benoit (1995), and has now received some experimental support for the first time.

Study 1 also revealed that some components of apology might be more important than others. In Study 2 we showed that one component might not be enough for apologizing, that for the given context — a neighborhood conflict — all component might be too much, but four components seem to be crucial. For the given context, these were the components conveying emotions, admitting fault, the statement of apology (IFID), such as “I apologize,” and an attempt at explanation.

We also raised the question of why an apology can contribute to forgiveness. Study 1 supported that, at least after more severe offences, anger reduction can — to some extent — explain the relationship between the utterance of an apology and forgiveness. However, in Study 2, anger reduction was not revealed as a mediator. One possible explanation may be that when the apology already includes the component that was rated as being most important, the other components do not add much to the reduction of anger. Yet, a more complete apology still increases the likelihood of forgiveness. This can be explained with the

content of the apology, which is perceived as more sufficient.

**Shortcomings of the studies.** Some shortcomings of the conducted studies need to be stated explicitly. First, the basic methodological decision — against a qualitative study and in favor of a quantitative analysis — was definitely not an easy one. The authors were aware of the claim that “the best approach to collecting data about speech acts is the ethnographic approach — that is, the collection of spontaneous speech in natural settings” (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983, p. 24). This approach would produce data of high external validity allowing for a broad generalization of the results. However, we chose the quantitative experimental approach for reasons of internal validity. It allows a clear interpretation of the results, particularly with regard to the causal relation between the verbal content included in the apology and the likelihood to forgive. Because the identification of the causal relations was the primary aim of the study, the ethnographic approach was dismissed, accepting the reduction in external validity.

In comparison with real life settings, the format of the conducted studies did not allow for any interaction of the offender and the offended after the utterance of the apology that surpassed the acceptance or refusal of the apology. An apology can and should be dyadic, especially when it aims for forgiveness as well as for reconciliation in the long run (Alter, 1999; Goffman, 1971, p. 117; Hatch, 2006; Lazare, 2004, p. 66; Tavuchis, 1991, p. 46). That an interactive apology can have very positive effects indeed seems logical, because remaining concerns, especially on the part of the offended, can be directly addressed

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(Hatch, 2006). The online questionnaire also did not allow for an actual estimation of mimic, facial, or linguistic parameters such as tone and intonation of the expressions, which are particularly important for the evaluation of utterances and the conveyance of emotions (cf., Anderson et al., 2006; Dixon et al., 1994).

Furthermore, interpersonal research on apologies suggests that observers and direct receivers of apologies react differently toward spontaneous and coerced apologies. Whereas targets tend to accept apologies independent of their nature, observers do not (Weiner et al., 1991, Exp. 4). This could distort the results of vignette studies if the participants would have behaved more from the perspective of an observer or more from that of a target. Nevertheless, the latter only applies when the instructions to put themselves in the position of the offended are not followed correctly.

In line with critical comments on our studies, some general criticism that applies to the study of apologies should be mentioned. First of all, we do not want to suggest a distinct offender-offended-dichotomy, because in real life such a dichotomy is rarely found. Further, we want to address the concern that knowledge of the appropriate composition of an apology might be abused by an offender. This refers to the possibility that he or she wants to benefit from an apology in form of reduced punishment, for example, without actually accepting the blame or changing his or her attitude that is harmful to others (Allan et al., 2006; Byrne, 2004; Gill, 2000; Tavuchis, 1991, p. 7; Weiner et al., 1991). However, one is not obligated to forgive the offender after receiving an apology (Allan et al., 2006;

Byrne, 2004; Takaku et al., 2001; Weiner et al., 1991). Moreover, apologies are recognized as an instrument that can benefit both the offender and the offended (Bibas & Bierschbach, 2004; Petrucci, 2002; Robbenolt, 2008). Bibas and Bierschbach (2004) emphasize that the process of apologizing and forgiveness “teaches moral lessons, brings catharsis, and reconciles and heals offenders, victims, and society” (p. 89).

**Conclusion.** The present study extends previous research on apologies in at least three ways. First, instead of testing the effects of apologies in general and independently from the question how it is composed, the effects of 10 different verbal components were tested in different combinations. Further, the research did not only focus on apologies after less severe but also more severe offences. In addition, anger reduction as an underlying mechanism for the success of different compositions of apologies was examined.

Despite the mentioned shortcomings of both studies, it is possible to consider the results in the framing of apologies in personal one-on-one settings. Such a setting might be a mediation, for example (e.g., Schneider, 2000). Studies suggest that in those settings and particularly after a relatively severe offence, an apology with richer content may be more acceptable. It can also be assumed that the reduction of anger plays a role for explaining the latter finding. The significance of the findings lies in the potential of apologies to be an instrument of conflict resolution (e.g., Alter, 1999; Tavuchis, 1991).

Of course, the generalization over the examined context has to be applied carefully. For one, the observed population

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was not a representative one. Further, the question remains whether the four components we identified as being particularly important for the neighborhood conflict (including a statement of apology [IFID], conveying emotions, admitting fault, and attempt at explanation) would also be sufficient after offences with extremely severe victimization. We suggest, in line with previous literature, only a complete apology is likely to be acceptable after such offences (cf. Allan et al., 2006). It is, for example, assumed that in these contexts the component "offering reparations," which in Study 1 and 2 is rated as significantly less important, is particularly crucial because otherwise the apology is perceived as insincere (e.g., Govier & Verwoerd, 2002). Of course the question of what constitutes an adequate reparation is a field of research by itself (Brooks, 1999, pp. 8–9; Byrne, 2004).

**Further research.** The studies offer empirical results to the understudied field of research on the effects of the compositions of apologies. In particular, the effects of the verbal composition of apologies depending on relevant context variables, such as harm severity, still need to be explored in more depth. To question or support a set of basic components of apology, such as the one introduced by Kirchhoff et al. (2009, cf. Table 1), more studies need to be conducted.

Further research on the composition of apologies also needs to test whether the examined set of basic components also applies to political apologies. Previous research suggests that in the public setting, some components, such as conveying emotions, might not be very important (Lazare, 2004, p. 40; Tavuchis, 1991, p.

71). Especially for intergroup apologies, which commonly take place after extremely severe offences, empirical research remains sparse (e.g., Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Harris et al., 2006). Even though many have referred to the research on private interpersonal apologies to understand intergroup apologies, the relationship is not straightforward because these contexts are quite different (cf., Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008). We therefore call for further empirical research on the composition of apologies, not only in interpersonal, but also in intergroup settings.

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## Tables and Figures

TABLE 1

*Components of Apology Introduced by Kirchhoff, Strack, and Jäger (2009)*

Components of Apology	Description
Statement of apology (IFID)	Using a phrase that states that the given statement is an apology, such as “I want to apologize”.
Naming the offence	Naming the offence(s) for which the apology is given.
Taking responsibility	Stating that one accepts responsibility for the offence(s).
Attempting to explain the offence	Trying to explain one’s behavior that led to the offence(s) without applying an external attribution.
Conveying emotions	Revealing emotions such as shame and remorse that one has committed the offence(s)
Addressing emotions and/or damage of the other	Addressing of emotions and/or damages that the offence(s) caused on behalf of the offended.
Admitting fault	Admitting that with the offence(s) one violated an explicitly or implicitly agreed-upon rule.
Promising forbearance	Saying that one wants to refrain from repeating the offence(s).
Offering reparation	Offering to account for harm and/or damages on behalf of the offended by monetary or symbolic restitution.
Acceptance request	Stating that one hopes, the apology can be accepted by its receiver.

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TABLE 2

*The Variation of the Independent Measure "Completeness of Apology" in Study 1*

Name of component	Number of components included in the apology				
	1	4	5a	5b	10
1 Statement of apology (IFID)	x	x	x	x	x
2 Naming offence		x	x	x	x
3 Taking responsibility		x	x	x	x
4 Attempt at explanation					x
5 Conveying emotions			x		x
6 Addressing emotions of the other					x
7 Admitting fault				x	x
8 Forbearance					x
9 Reparation offer					x
10 Acceptance request		x	x	x	x

*Note.* An "x" signals that the component is part of the apology. The complete apology, containing 10 components, was phrased the following: "I want to apologize to you (1) that without any reason I complained to you and have been abusive to you (2). I am responsible for what happened (3). In the situation I lost control (4) and I am ashamed for what happened (5). I have recognized that I upset you (6). My behavior was definitely wrong (7). What happened will not happen again (8). I you want, I would like to make you an offer of reparation (9). I hope you can accept my apology (10)."

TABLE 3

*Items of the Forgiveness Scale Used in Study1 and Study 2*

Item
I forgive the neighbor.
I accept the apology.
I perceive the apology to be adequate.
I perceive the apology to be sincere.
The neighbor included everything in the apology that I wanted to hear from him.

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TABLE 4

*Analysis of Subjective Apology Content (Study 1): Ratings for Each Component as Being Missed When Included Compared to When not Included in the Apology*

Name of component	not included	included	t-Test
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	t(df=181)
Statement of apology (IFID)	-	1.39 (1.00)	-
Naming offence	3.09 (1.48)	1.75 (1.18)	5.73***
Taking responsibility	3.00 (1.43)	1.28 ( .83)	9.36***
Attempt at explanation	4.21 (1.20)	3.35 (1.60)	3.58***
Conveying emotions	2.53 (1.40)	1.63 (1.09)	4.55***
Addressing emotions of other	2.46 (1.41)	1.62 (1.01)	3.41***
Admitting fault	2.29 (1.51)	1.43 (1.09)	4.22***
Forbearance	3.81 (1.35)	1.22 ( .97)	11.03***
Reparation offer	2.72 (1.53)	1.19 ( .52)	5.99
Acceptance request	2.26 (1.37)	1.26 ( .69)	8.60

Note. When the component is significantly rated as being missed more when not included in the apology compared with when included in the apology, it can be inferred that the subjective content of the apology is similar to the objective one.

\*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

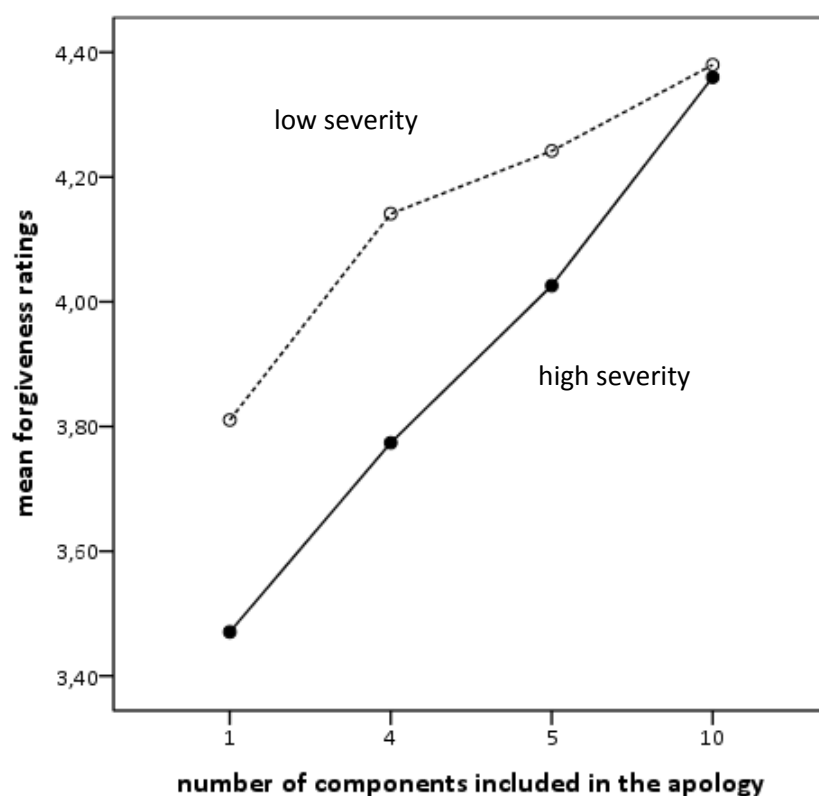


Figure 1. Mean forgiveness ratings depending on the completeness of apology and offence severity in Study 1.

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TABLE 5

*Means and Standard Deviations for Forgiveness in Study 1  
Depending on Offence Severity and Completeness of Apology*

	less severe condition	more severe condition
Number of components in apology	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
1	3.81 (.69)	3.47 (.74)
4	4.14 (.58)	3.78 (.84)
5	4.24 (.60)	4.03 (.76)
10	4.38 (.51)	4.36 (.51)

TABLE 6

*Correlations, Means and Standard Deviations in the More Severe Condition for  
Variables Included in the Tested Mediation Model in Study 1*

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. "Less and more complete" contrast	-	-	.29**	.33**
2. „Extreme“ contrast	-	-	.22*	.37***
3. Anger reduction			-	.64***
4. Forgiveness				-
<i>M<sup>a</sup></i>	-	-	4.27	3.93
<i>SD</i>	-	-	.72	.78

*Note.* The independent variable completeness of apology was contrast coded.

The "extreme" contrast compares the one-component and the 10-component apology.

The "less and more complete" contrast compares the one- and four-component with the five- and 10-component apologies.

<sup>a</sup>*N* = 91.

\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .



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TABLE 7

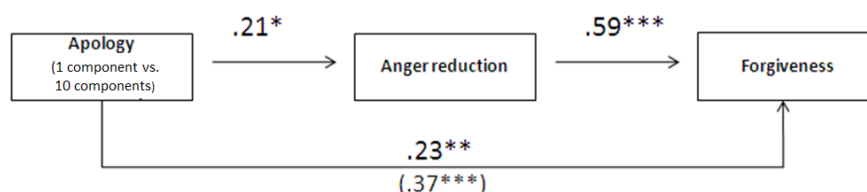
*Fit Indices for the Confirmatory Factor Analysis Testing  
Anger Reduction and Forgiveness in a One-factor and a  
Two-factor Model for the High Severity Condition in Study 1*

Fit indices	1-factor model	2-factor model
$\chi^2$ (df), $p$	42.17 (14), $p^{***}$	32.10 (13), $p^{**}$
CFI	.89	.92
RMSEA	.15	.13
SRMR	.06	.05

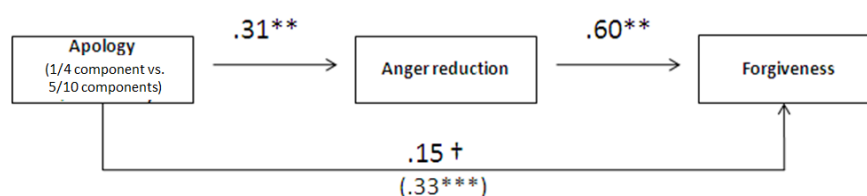
*Note.* CFI = comparative fit index, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, SRMR = standardized root mean squared residual.

\*\*  $p \leq .01$ ,  $p^{***} \leq .001$

a.



b.



**FIGURE 2.** Results for testing anger reduction as a mediator between the relationship of the apology's completeness and forgiveness after the more severe offence for the (a.) "extreme" and (b.) the "less and more complete" contrast in Study 1.

†  $p \leq .10$ , \*  $p \leq .05$ ,  $p^{**} \leq .01$ ,  $p^{***} \leq .001$ .

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TABLE 8

*Comparison of the Importance Ratings of Each Component for Study 1 and 2*

Name of Component	Study 1 Mean (SD)	Study 2 Mean (SD)
<i>4 most important components</i>		
Conveying emotions	3.89 (1.33)	4.33 (.82)
Admitting fault	3.79 (1.48)	4.43 (.75)
Statement of apology (IFID)	3.71 (1.55)	4.32 (.91)
Attempt at explanation	3.69 (1.31)	4.48 (.74)
<i>middle range</i>		
Forbearance	3.52 (1.37)	3.93 (1.08)
Addressing emotions of other	3.44 (1.40)	4.09 (1.09)
Taking responsibility	3.32 (1.41)	4.16 (.91) <sup>a</sup>
Naming of the offence	3.32 (1.36)	4.09 (.97)
<i>2 least important components</i>		
Acceptance request	2.89 (1.40)	3.39 (1.35)
Offering reparations	2.16 (1.09)	2.44 (1.21)

Note. <sup>a</sup> This component is on rank 5, but in contrast to Study 1 it was also rated as significantly more important than all other components in Study 2.

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TABLE 9

*The Variation of the Independent Measure “Completeness of Apology” for Study 2 Based on the Importance Ratings for Each Component in Study 1*

Name of component	Number of components included in the apology			
	1	4	5	10
1. Statement of apology (IFID)		x	x	x
2. Naming offence				x
3. Taking on responsibility				x
4. Attempt at explanation		x	x	x
5. Conveying emotions	x	x	x	x
6. Addressing emotions of the other				x
7. Admitting fault		x	x	x
8. Forbearance			x	x
9. Reparation offer				x
10. Acceptance request				x

*Note.* An “x” signals that the component is part of the apology. The complete apology, containing 10 components, was phrased as in Study (cf. Table 2).

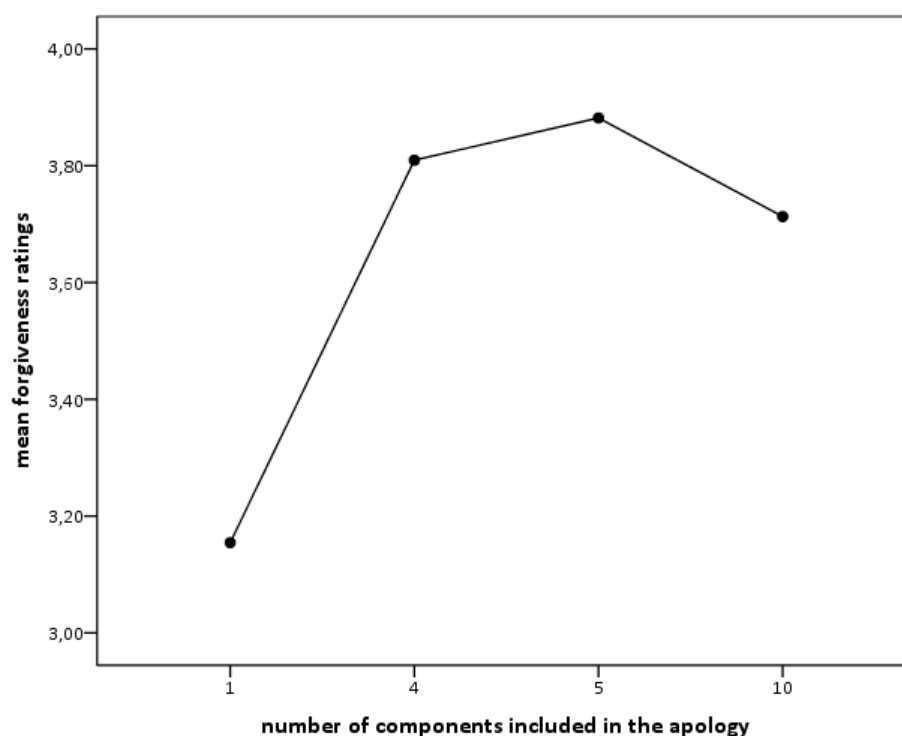


Figure 3. Mean forgiveness ratings depending on the completeness of apology in Study 2.

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TABLE 10

*Means and Standard Deviations for Forgiveness  
in Study 2 Depending on the Completeness of Apology*

Number of components in apology	Forgiveness Mean (SD)
1	3.15 ( .86)
4	3.80 (1.05)
5	3.88 ( .98)
10	3.71 ( .94)

TABLE 11

*Correlations for Anger Reduction and the Apology Contrasts in Study 2*

Apology Contrasts	Anger reduction
1. One- and four-component contrast	.09 <sup>ns</sup>
2. Four- and five-component contrast	-.07 <sup>ns</sup>
3. Five- and 10-component contrast	-.01 <sup>ns</sup>
4. "Less and more complete" contrast	.01 <sup>ns</sup>
5. "Extreme" contrast	.03 <sup>ns</sup>

*Note.* The independent variable completeness of apology was contrast coded.  
The "extreme" contrast compares the one-component and the 10-component apology.  
The "less and more complete" contrast compares the one- and four-component with  
the five- and 10-component apologies.  
ns = not significant.

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## APPENDIX A

*Manipulation for the Low and High Severity Condition as Introduced to the Participants*

Low Severity	High Severity
Imagine that you lived in a rental home with several apartments. On your floor you have a direct neighbor. You know each other since one year and so far there have been no issues. You always greeted each other friendly.	Imagine that you lived in a rental home with several apartments. On your floor you have a direct neighbor. You know each other since one year and so far there have been no issues. You always greeted each other friendly.
However, with this neighbor you had <b>a small dispute</b> last week. When you met incidentally in the hallway, the neighbor complained that you have made too much noise lately.	However, with this neighbor you had <b>an intense and escalated conflict</b> last week. When you met incidentally in the hallway, the neighbor complained that you have made too much noise lately.
In this <b>dispute</b> the neighbor affronted you. Doing that he also <b>grabbed your arm</b> . When asked for, the neighbor <b>let go</b> .	In this <b>dispute</b> the neighbor <b>yelled and meanly affronted</b> you. Doing that he also <b>harshly grabbed your arm and pushed you</b> . When asked for, the neighbor <b>did not let go and grabbed even tighter</b> .
Since the incident you and the neighbor have avoided each other lately.	Since the incident you and the neighbor have avoided each other lately.

*Note.* The bold expressions are the ones that differ between the conditions.

## APPENDIX B

*Items for Personal Irreconcilability Drawing from the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) by McCullough et al. (1998)*

Items
<p>If a person angered or hurt you, are you than a person, who...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. will make that person pay?</li> <li>2. will keep the distance between you and that person as big as possible?</li> <li>3. wishes that something bad would happen to that person?</li> <li>4. lives as if that person doesn't exist, isn't around?</li> <li>5. doesn't trust that person?</li> <li>6. wants that person to get what s/he deserves?</li> <li>7. finds it difficult to act warmly toward that person?</li> <li>8. avoids that person?</li> <li>9. is going to get even with that person?</li> <li>10. cuts off the relationship with that person?</li> <li>11. wants to see that person hurt and miserable?</li> <li>12. withdraws from that person?</li> </ol>

*Note.* Avoidance Motivation: items 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, and 12; Revenge Motivation: items 1, 3, 6, 9, and 11.

**3. Manuscript 2:**

**Intergroup Apologies: Does it Matter What They say?  
Experimental Analyses in Germany as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Johanna Kirchhoff & Sabina Čehajić-Clancy (under review)

Submission Date: 05.11.2012

## **Intergroup Apologies: Does it Matter What They say? Experimental Analyses in Germany as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina**

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Sabina Čehajić-Clancy  
 Sarajevo School of Science and Technology

Intergroup apologies are common in public life, yet their experimental analysis has remained sparse. In two online vignette studies we analyzed *which* content of public intergroup apologies (PIAs) increases the acceptance of the apology by the victimized group and their intergroup forgiveness. In addition, we ask *why* the content of PIAs impacts on their effectiveness. Concerning the *which*-question we predicted that a PIA including more relevant components of apology is more effective than PIAs including fewer of these components (1st hypothesis). We also purported that this particularly applies after more severe transgressions (2nd hypothesis). Addressing the *why*-question we suggested that the relationship between the PIA's content and its effectiveness is mediated by a reduction of intergroup anger (3rd hypothesis) and increased feelings of empowerment on behalf of the victimized group (4th hypothesis). For Study 1 (N = 289) the chosen intergroup setting was gender discrimination in Germany and in Study 2 (N = 110) the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995). We varied the severity of transgression in two steps in Study 1 and number of components in the PIA in five steps in both studies. The 1st hypothesis was supported by both studies. However, the data also showed that the components that had to be included in the PIA in order to increase the effectiveness of the apology varied across Study 1 and 2. In addition, the relevant effects applied to the acceptance of the apology but not to intergroup forgiveness. Study 1 also offered some support for the 2nd hypothesis. In both studies the 3rd and the 4th hypothesis were not verified. Implications for conflict transformation and further research are discussed.

**Keywords:** intergroup apologies, components of apology, severity of transgression

### **INTRODUCTION**

Willy Brandt, Nelson Mandela, Boris Yeltsin, Bill Clinton, Junichiro Koizumi, and Barack Obama: What do they have in common despite being (former) head of states? They all have publicly apologized for transgressions on behalf of a collective. The most recent example is that Barack Obama apologized for the burning of Qurans in Afghanistan by NATO troops in 2012. And there are many more. Some researchers who write about public intergroup apologies (PIAs in the following) have coined the term “age

of apology” to underline their prevalence (Brooks, 1999; Gibney, Howard-Hassmann, Coicaud, & Steiner, 2008; Harris, Grainger, & Mullany, 2006). Villadsen (2012) puts forward that whereas the focus of the empirical analysis of apologies was for long time on interpersonal apologies it has now shifted to intergroup apologies. Reason for the interest in PIAs might stem from the expectation that they are important for reconciliation (Čehajić, Brown, & Castano, 2008; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008; Wohl,

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Hornsey, & Philpot, 2011). Despite this, the empirical analysis of PIAs remains sparse (Ashy, Mercurio, & Malley-Morrison, 2010; Bilder, 2008; Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Iyer & Blatz, 2012; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008; Wohl et al., 2011).

Furthermore, intergroup apologies cause controversy in the public realm after they have been uttered (Harris et al., 2006) and ambivalence in the scholarly disciplines concerning their meaningfulness (Villadsen, 2012; Wohl et al., 2011). Barkan and Karn (2006) take it to the top by stating that critics might consider PIAs as “a cheap and easy way for perpetrators and their descendants to assuage their guilt” (p. 6).

However, we agree with Thompson (2008), who claims that even if all previous PIAs are perceived as insufficient or meaningless, this does not mean that the practice of PIAs is without value. Rather the question must be what exactly is expected of PIAs in order to be perceived as meaningful (Smith, 2008, p. 245; Villadsen, 2012). Harris et al. (2006) suggest that “it is in large measure the fact that listeners and viewers *do* have a sense of what constitutes an ‘unequivocal apology’” (p. 734). But what is an unequivocal public intergroup apology (PIA in the following)? More precisely, the pending questions are which content of PIAs is effective and why the content of PIAs impacts on their effectiveness (cf. Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Iyer & Blatz, 2012; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008). To illuminate these questions is the overarching goal of this paper.

In the theory section of this paper we define PIAs and introduce measurements for the evaluation of their effectiveness in form of acceptance of the apology by the victimized group and their readiness to forgive the group of the transgressors. We

also give an overview on the literature which depicts the impact of the content (i.e., the components) of PIAs and the severity of the transgression on the effects of PIAs on the victimized group. This theoretical input results in the development of hypotheses that seek to highlight *which* content of PIAs is effective. In order to find explanations to the question *why* the content of PIAs contributes to their effectiveness, possible mediator variables (anger, empowerment) that might explain the relationship between the content of PIAs and measurements of their effects are theoretically developed. Subsequently we portray and discuss the two experimental studies on PIAs we conducted in Germany (Study 1) and in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Study 2). Finally, the overall results of our two studies are discussed.

### Theoretical Background

**Defining public intergroup apologies (PIAs).** Apologies are an instrument of conflict transformation with which it is acted on transgressions in order to achieve reconciliation (e.g., Alter, 1999; Petrucci, 2002). A public apology is defined by Govier and Verwoerd (2002) as an apology “that is expressed in the public domain on the assumption that it is relevant to the public at large and not solely to the victims of the wrongdoing.” (pp. 67-68). When they take place within the political realm public apologies are frequently referred to as political apologies (Griswold, 2007, p. 135; Vines, 2007). Public apologies can be uttered on the interpersonal or the intergroup level (Govier & Verwoerd, 2002; Tavuchis, 1991). In the paper at hand we evaluate public *intergroup* apologies, which are public



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apologies offered from one group to another group for former wrongdoings (cf. Tavuchis, 1991). Thompson (2008) writes about PIA that it “is an official apology given by a representative of a state, corporation, or other organized group to victims, or descendants of victims, for injustices committed by a group’s officials or members” (p. 31). PIAs are also offered for large and complex harms (Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Govier & Verwoerd, 2002), which might be considered as unforgivable (Coicaud & Jönsson, 2008; Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003). In the latter case PIAs are often historically significant acts, which are frequently accompanied by thorough preparation, an official ceremony, and follow-up actions (Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Thompson, 2008).

**Acceptance of the apology and intergroup forgiveness as effect measures.** For measuring the effects of PIA the acceptance of an apology by the victimized group and their intergroup forgiveness can be considered as relevant markers. Previous research on PIAs has focused on intergroup forgiveness when measuring the effects of PIAs (e.g., Brown, Wohl, & Exline, 2008; Leonard, Mackie, & Smith, 2011; Wohl, Hornsey, & Bennett, 2012). *Interpersonal* forgiveness is defined as a change of attitudes or emotions toward an offender (McCullough et al., 1998; Myers, Hewstone, & Cairns, 2009). This concept of forgiveness as a change of attitudes or emotions can also be applied to the intergroup context (cf. Exline et al., 2003), even though the relevant entity is not a single offender but a collective (Čehajić et al., 2008; Wohl & Branscombe, 2005). Yet, when researching on the effects

of PIAs on intergroup forgiveness some issues have to be considered.

First, there may be disagreement within the group receiving the PIA whether to forgive (Exline et al., 2003). Furthermore, for some members of the offended group it might be important to identify individual offenders and receive individual apologies to be able to forgive (Exline et al., 2003; Tam et al., 2007). In addition, it is problematic when PIAs call for forgiveness on behalf of others or even those already dead, because that can influence the likelihood of forgiveness negatively (Brown et al., 2008; Exline et al., 2003). The victimized group may also hesitate to forgive the outgroup until actual behavioral changes ensue the PIA (Wohl et al., 2011). Last but not least, the expectation that a PIA which is offered for severe transgressions is followed by forgiveness might be too high if people question that the transgression is forgivable at all (cf. Blatz, 2008, p. 4; Griswold, 2007, pp. 142-143).

Previous findings on the effects of PIAs on intergroup forgiveness are mixed. Philpot and Hornsey (2008) did find effects of PIAs on satisfaction with the response as such but not on intergroup forgiveness, while Philpot and Hornsey (2010) revealed positive but weak effects of a memory of a PIA on intergroup forgiveness. On the other hand, Brown et al. (2008, study 1) and Leonard et al. (2011) do support positive effects of PIAs on intergroup forgiveness.

Due to the issues stemming from the concept of intergroup forgiveness and the heterogenic findings of previous research on the effects of PIAs on forgiveness, it seems plausible to not primarily consider intergroup forgiveness as a marker of success for a PIA, but also the acceptance of or satisfaction with the PIA itself (cf. Blatz,

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2008, p. 4; Goffman, 1971, p. 119; Griswold, 2007, p. 142; Leonard et al., 2011).

**Effects of PIAs depending on their components.** With our research design we want to move beyond the question *if* PIAs are effective and instead ask *which* ones are effective. The latter question calls for a systematical analysis of the content of PIAs. By comparing the effects of PIAs on intergroup forgiveness with responses in a no-apology condition, the research by Brown et al. (2008), Philpot and Hornsey (2008; 2010) as well as Leonard et al. (2011) reported on above only analyzed the general effectiveness of PIAs. The approach chosen in the previous studies does not allow concluding which content of the PIAs contributes to the findings of the effectiveness of the PIAs.

Some researchers indeed suggest that the acceptance of a PIA might be less a question of its content, but rather depends on the (political) motive of the receiver and expected gains for accepting or refusing the PIA (Cunningham, 1999; Kampf, 2008). Of course, the motive of the receiver might influence if the receivers reject a PIA without further considerations. Nevertheless, when the receiver is motivated to accept a PIA, the content of the PIA can be very critical (cf. Iyer & Blatz, 2012). It is claimed that the content of PIAs must be unambiguous and carefully chosen in order to avoid further transgression (Griswold, 2007, p. 151; Tavuchis, 1991). Barkan and Karn (2006) emphasize the importance of the PIA's content by stating that words are often of greater value than the sentiments accompanying the PIA.

However, the question remains *which* content it is that is decisive (cf. Iyer & Blatz,

2012). Unfortunately, researchers suggest different sets of elementary content of apologies. In particular the development of a consistent model within the intergroup context has been sparse (cf. Blatz, Schumann, & Ross, 2009; Kampf, 2008; Wohl et al., 2011). Kirchhoff et al. (2012) have suggested a 10-component model based on a comprehensive literature review, trying to organize the vast variety of suggested components of apology in the literature (cf. Table 1). Yet, Kirchhoff et al. (2012) have primarily focused on the interpersonal context. Based on a comprehensive qualitative review on apologies in the *intergroup* context Blatz et al. (2009) introduced four possible components of apologies not included by Kirchhoff et al. (2012). The four components by Blatz et al. (2009) have been suggested to be particularly relevant in the intergroup context (Iyer & Blatz, 2012). Thus, in our studies on PIAs we consider the four components by Blatz et al. (2009) in addition to the components introduced in the model by Kirchhoff et al. (2012). All 14 components are displayed in Table 1.

To our knowledge there are three experimental studies that researched on the content of PIAs. With an Australian sample Philpot and Hornsey (2008, study 4) scrutinized the effects of PIAs from Japan for war crimes against Australians in WWII. They manipulated the verbal emotionality of a PIA, which already contained an acknowledgement of fault, remorse, responsibility, forbearance, and an offer of repair. They found that higher emotionality of the PIA had no effect on the participants' evaluation, such as the satisfaction with the response and intergroup forgiveness. Also scrutinizing the effects of adding emotions in

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PIAs are Wohl et al. (2012, study 4). They applied an experimental design referring to a fire accident in Afghanistan, in which Canadian soldiers were killed. The Canadian participants were told that the Afghan Defense Minister had apologized and promised forbearance. That basic apology was combined with emotions such as shame and concern or no emotions. The study by Wohl et al. (2012) revealed that a PIA including emotions such as shame and concern produced less intergroup forgiveness than a PIA including no emotion. Blatz (2008, study 1) analyzed the perception of different PIAs for the Chinese Head Tax in Canada (1885-1923). For the Chinese participants he found that a PIA combined with a compensation offer was followed by significantly higher levels of intergroup forgiveness than offering a PIA only.

The three previous studies on PIA seem to suggest that the addition of expressing emotions to a PIA is not effective in increasing intergroup forgiveness (Philpot & Hornsey, 2008) or even negatively impacts on the effectiveness of the PIA (Wohl et al., 2012) but that the addition of a compensation offer increases forgiveness by the group of the victimized (Blatz, 2008). However, all studies have to be interpreted cautiously. The results might allow concluding that the addition of a certain component to the particular scrutinized PIA had or had not an effect on the receiver of the PIA. Yet, the results do not really allow inferring answers to the question which content of PIAs is effective. In all three studies components were added to a PIA whose further basic components were not critically scrutinized, for example in reliance on theoretical models such as the one by Blatz et al. (2009) and Kirchhoff et al. (2012).

This critique applies in particular to Blatz (2008, study 1). The operationalization of the PIA he applied was longer than one page and included various contents. Similarly, the manipulation of the emotionality of the PIA by Philpot and Hornsey (2008, study 4) impedes a clear interpretation of the effectiveness of the PIA's content. The authors added not only a single statement but various contents to the PIA to change its emotionality (e.g., "feelings of deep regret and remorse", "our hearts grieve"). In addition, none of the three studies considered that the relevance of the components in a PIA depends on the demands of the receiving group (cf. Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Iyer & Blatz, 2012). Hence, some of the components included in the PIAs in the three studies reported on above might not have had an effect at all if not even a negative impact on the evaluation of the PIAs when they did not correspond with the demands of the victimized group.

Concluding, so far previous research does not allow inferring which components have to be included in a successful PIA. With our studies we want to systematize the analysis of the effects of the components included in a PIA. Thus first of all, we refer to the 14 components introduced by Blatz et al. (2009) and Kirchhoff et al. (2012) for the operationalization of the PIAs instead of applying a random selection of the PIAs' content (cf. Table 1). Secondly, we only scrutinize the effects of components in a PIA that have been identified as relevant. To attain information on the relevance of the 14 components for the given contexts we conduct pretests in Study 1 and 2. Thirdly, we cautiously operationalize the components so that each one is distinct. Fourthly, we compare the effects of PIAs that

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include distinct and relevant components in different combinations. Last but not least, we not only analyze the effects of the content of PIAs on intergroup forgiveness but also on their acceptance, due to the issues of the concept of intergroup forgiveness (see above). Being this precise we can test what components in a PIA *really* impact on the dependent measures.

**H1:** A PIA containing more of the relevant components is more successful than PIAs including fewer of these components. Successful refers to higher ratings for the acceptance of the apology or intergroup forgiveness by the victimized group.

**The severity of the transgression and the content of PIAs.** It seems plausible that after a minor offence, a PIA needs to include less information than a PIA for more severe transgressions in order to be perceived as sufficient. Thus, the relationship suggested in H1 has to be analyzed with regard to transgressions of varying severity. For the interpersonal context it has been suggested that the severity of the transgression has an impact on how more or less complete apologies are perceived. The idea is that with higher severity of the harm an apology needs to be more complete (Benoit, 1995, p. 43; Gill, 2000). Kirchhoff et al. (2012) have supported this with an experimental design. In their study the inclusion of more components was more important following harm in an interpersonal neighborhood conflict of higher severity than in one of lower severity.

On the intergroup level it is still an open question how the severity of the transgressions influences the effectiveness

of PIAs (Blatz & Philpot, 2010). It is important to analyze that question, because PIAs are not only uttered for transgressions of lower severity such as misconduct on a public event by a group of public interest. PIAs are also given for severe crimes such as human rights violations (cf. Exline et al., 2003; Griswold, 2007, p. 172; Harris et al., 2006). It can be assumed that PIAs, too, have to be more thorough (i.e., including more content) when offered for more severe transgressions (cf. Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Iyer & Blatz, 2012). In our paper we want to shed light on the relationship between the content of PIAs and their effects depending on the severity of the transgression.

**H2:** H1 applies in particular to more severe transgressions. After a more severe transgression the addition of relevant components has a greater impact on the acceptance of the PIA or intergroup forgiveness by the victimized group than when the severity of the transgression is lower.

**Mediator variables between the content of the PIA and measurements of effects.** So far we have focused on the question *which* content of PIAs is effective by suggesting that their effectiveness depends on the included components. With our study we also want to identify a mechanism that explains *why* the content of PIAs contributes to their effectiveness. Because of this, we want to analyze relevant mediator variables for the relationship between the content of PIAs and measurements of success. Mediator variables of interest are intergroup anger and the need for empowerment.

**Anger.** Intergroup Emotions Theory (IET; e.g., Smith & Mackie, 2008) suggests that

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emotions influence intergroup relations. The link of so called negative emotions (such as anger and fear) and intergroup conflict has been of interest to various researchers. It is accepted as well established that group based emotions such as anger and fear impede conflict resolution (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011, p. 224). Many researchers have suggested that intergroup anger in particular plays a crucial role for intergroup conflict and forgiveness, because intergroup anger inhibits the latter (Manzi & González, 2007; Philpot & Hornsey, 2010; Tam et al., 2007). Tam et al. (2007) report for example that intergroup anger impacts on intergroup forgiveness over and above the effects of other intergroup emotions. Weiner, Graham, Peter, and Zmuidinas (1991) have found that public but interpersonal apologies precede a decrease in anger. In addition, Leonard et al. (2011) have shown that intergroup anger mediated the relationship between a PIA and the desire for retribution. We are interested if intergroup anger mediates the relationship between the content of PIAs and its acceptance or intergroup forgiveness by the victimized group. As far as we know experimental research regarding this question is nonexistent.

**H3:** The reduction of intergroup anger in members of the victimized group mediates the relationship between the content of PIA and acceptance of the apology or intergroup forgiveness by the victimized group.

**Empowerment.** Human needs and their violation or satisfaction play a crucial role for conflict resolution in the intergroup context (Shnabel, Nadler, Ullrich, Dovidio, & Carmi, 2009; Staub, 2003). On behalf of victims the

need for empowerment is prominently discussed (Iyer & Blatz, 2012; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Shnabel et al. (2009) empirically supported the idea that members of a victimized group show greater willingness to reconcile when they perceive a message of empowerment. In the realm of interpersonal conflicts it has been suggested that apologies from the transgressors can enhance the status of the recipient which had been reduced by the transgressor's offence and thus be empowering (e.g., Hareli & Eiskovits, 2006; Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008; Smith, 2008, pp. 64-67). Correspondingly Govier and Verwoerd (2002) argue in their concept of moral apologies that also applies to the intergroup context. They emphasize that an apology most importantly has to accomplish the acknowledgement of the human dignity of the victims, thus conveying a message of empowerment. We predict that the perception of a message of empowerment by the victimized group can explain the relationship between the content of PIAs and measurements of effects.

**H4:** The perception of a message of empowerment by members of the victimized group mediates the relationship between the content of PIAs and acceptance of the apology or intergroup forgiveness by the victimized group.

**Scrutinizing PIA in an experimental design.** Olshtain and Cohen (1983) state that "the best approach to collecting data about speech acts is the ethnographic approach – i.e., the collection of spontaneous speech in natural settings" (p.24). Many previous studies on public (intergroup) apologies have chosen such a qualitative approach by for

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example analyzing the content of published apologies (e.g., Kampf, 2008, 2009; Lind, 2008; Nobles, 2008). This approach produces data of high external validity. Nevertheless, we decided to apply a quantitative experimental approach. The main reason for this procedure is the higher internal validity that allows for a clear interpretation of the results with regard to identifying the causal relation between the content included in the PIA and measurements of effects.

Furthermore, when researching on the effects of PIAs, it is important to control for variables that in addition to the direct effect of the PIA influence people's reaction in conflict. This is possible in experimental research. Culture, for example, is a relevant variable as it might profoundly influence the act of a PIA (Coicaud & Jönsson, 2008; Griswold, 2007, p. 155). The political situation in which the PIA is uttered (Smith, 2008, p. 249), where the PIA is offered and on which occasion (Wohl et al., 2011), the timing of the PIA (Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Coicaud & Jönsson, 2008), and the celebrations accompanying the process (Griswold, 2007, p. 162) also may play a crucial role. These variables can be held constant in each of the two experimental studies we conduct. On behalf of a single person perceiving a PIA, individual differences might influence how the PIA is sensed (Smith, 2008, p. 249). Such variables are gender, age, ingroup identification, the perceived right to forgive, the personal impact, and trait forgiveness (cf. Alter, 1999; Brown et al., 2008). These variables can be controlled for by random assignment of participants to the different conditions we use in our research design.

### The present studies

We are interested in whether members of a previously victimized group perceive a PIA by a representative of the transgressing group differently depending on the content of the PIA. We also want to analyze if the relationship between the content of the PIA and its perception by the victimized depends on the severity of transgression for which the PIA is offered. Furthermore we want to know if the described relationship can be explained by the reduction of intergroup anger and the perception of empowerment by members of the victimized group. Our first study is conducted in Germany and the second one in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In both studies the hypotheses developed in the theory section are addressed.

### STUDY 1

**Research context.** The chosen conflict for the study in Germany is gender related and takes place at university. Gender related issues in the realm of the scholarly setting in Germany are a relevant topic. Academic forthcoming in Germany is influenced by gender: Even though the percentage of males and females who access higher education is similar, females are underrepresented in higher positions of the academic field (GESIS, 2012). Direct discrimination within the processes of selection contributes to the gender imbalance for higher positions within scholarly disciplines (Leemann, 2002). We chose the issue of gender-biased selection of males as the source of intergroup conflict for which the group of the male transgressors offers a PIA to the discriminated group of the females.

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**Method**

**Sample.** Participants were recruited via several mailing lists of university students (September/October 2011). Out of 333 participants 289 participants were included in the data set. 44 participants were excluded, because they did not complete the relevant dependent measures. Only female students were surveyed. The major subjects of the students were heterogenic with two groups being more prominent (19.70% students of psychology, 10.00% students of medicine). On average participants were 25.59 years old ( $SD = 3.94$ ).

**Procedure.** We conducted an online vignette study. Participants were welcomed and had to report demographic information (age, major subject). Afterwards they learned about a transgression by a group of male professors (outgroup) against their ingroup (female students), which was either of low or high severity. The subjective severity of the transgression was rated on a separate page (manipulation check). Then participants were told to imagine that they are present when a male representative of the outgroup (the dean) gives a public speech. The speech included one of five differently phrased PIAs. Thus, we used a 2 (severity of transgression)  $\times$  5 (components of apology) between-subjects design. Subsequently the dependent measures, which are acceptance of the apology, intergroup forgiveness, the reduction of intergroup anger and perceived empowerment, had to be completed. Then participants had to answer how much they had missed the displayed components within the PIA (manipulation check). Finally there was the opportunity to leave comments on

the study and the participants were thanked and debriefed.

**Independent measures**

**Severity of the transgression.** The severity of the transgression was varied in two versions of a scenario: Participants were asked to imagine that one year ago the professors of their university department awarded one scholarship [vs. ten in the high severe condition] exclusively to (a) male applicant(s) despite equally qualified female applicants. The same, they were told, also applied to the cast of one student research position [vs. eight positions]. Participants were then informed that female students did not feel disadvantaged [vs. strongly disadvantaged] by the professors in seminars in comparison with their male fellow students. The last sentence in the low severe condition stated that most female students felt they were treated coequally. In the high severe condition the participants read instead that many female students felt treated extremely unfair and subordinate by the professors. The manipulation check of the severity of the transgression was implemented with three items (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .96$ ): "What happened is very severe.", "I am very angry about what happened." and "What happened is a systematic discrimination of female students." Answer scales ranged from "I don't agree at all" (1) to "I totally agree" (7).

**Components of apology.** The content of the PIA was varied in five versions. The selection of these versions is described in the following. For the scrutinized intergroup context 14 components of apology can be considered relevant (cf. Table 1). As research on the components of apology is sparse, we conducted a pretest to check for

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the relevance of the 14 components of apology for the given context. With an online questionnaire, we recruited 24 female students ( $M = 29.04$ ,  $SD = 8.15$ ) via a mailing list to imagine institutional gender discrimination. They were told the institution had exclusively regarded male applicants for a position despite equally qualified female applicants and that the institution had decided to give a public speech. Afterwards participants rated the importance of the 14 displayed components that could possibly accompany an apology given by the representative within the speech [5-point scale, “not important at all to be included”(1) – “very important to be included”(5)]. We also asked participants to indicate which of these components do not have to be included in the apology at all (no scale, it was possible to check each item). The results of the pretest are displayed in Table 2.

For the operationalization of the five PIAs, we constrained our focus on 11 components. One-sample  $t$ -tests across the importance ranking of the 14 components revealed that the first significant difference was between the 11th and 12th component ( $t(23) = 2.65$ ,  $p = .01$ , cf. Table 2). Thus, we refrained from considering the last 3 components as they seemed to be significantly less important than the other ones.

The first PIA included the two components with the highest ranking in the pretest, which were naming the transgression and the statement of apology (IFID) (cf. Table 2). The component naming the transgression is often described as mandatory for an apology because otherwise the receiver of the apology does not know what is being apologized for (Lazare, 2004, p. 77; Smith, 2008, p. 28). Similarly, the statement of

apology (IFID) is often said to have a perfunctory character which initiates the apology process (cf. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Schlenker & Darby, 1981). Hence, we kept these two components constant in our apology manipulation. The second, third and fourth PIA included either three, four or five components. To the basic PIA including two components we added the three following components one after another in order of the importance ranking in the pretest: taking responsibility, promising forbearance and conveying emotions. The fifth PIA included all 11 components identified as relevant for the given context in the pretest (cf. Table 2). This way we were able to test if the remaining six components still have an additional effect on the dependent measures when compared to PIAs including a variation of the five components rated as more important in the pretest. The five versions of the PIAs are displayed in Table 3.

All PIAs were introduced by stating that the following statement is an extract of a public speech, which took place within the assembly hall of the university. It was said that the speech was given by the male dean of the department as the representative of the professors, because they had agreed on the importance of speaking to the public.

**Operationalization of components in the PIAs.** The operationalization of the scrutinized 11 components of apology is more difficult for some of the components than for others. The phrasing for the statement of apology (IFID), taking on responsibility, promising forbearance, admitting a norm violation, addressing the suffering, and asking for acceptance of the apology is quite straightforward. In the format of the experimental design the naming of the transgression as well as an



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appropriate praise of the outgroup is also easily operationalized because the context is quite distinct. It is more difficult to operationalize the semantic content of the components conveying emotions, attempting to explain the transgression, and offering reparation, because a variety of contents could be incorporated.

Shame and guilt can be considered regarding the operationalization of the component conveying emotions (cf. Kirchhoff et al., 2012). We decided to operationalize the component conveying emotions with shame and not guilt. Schoemann (2011, study 1 and 2) revealed no differences on the likelihood of forgiveness whether a PIA was combined with either shame or guilt. Yet, results by Giner-Sorolla, Castano, Espinos, and Brown (2008) support that shame seems to have a better reconciliatory impact compared to guilt, because it has a higher status-lowering function. Furthermore, group based guilt and perceived responsibility are correlated (McGarty et al., 2005); the usage of shame reduces the overlap of the component taking responsibility and conveying emotions.

For the component which is an attempt of an explanation it needs to be considered that it is inherent to the concept of apologies that they do not deny or justify the committed transgression (Itoi, Ohbuchi, & Fukuno, 1996). The key to integrating an explanation in an apology, without risking that it is perceived as a justification or a denial, is to not refer to an external but instead to an internal and unstable cause (Petrucci, 2002; Weiner, 1972). We decided to refer to "human failure" as an explanatory attempt.

The operationalization of the components offering reparations is problematic because

it is not clear what the recipients consider to be appropriate reparation (Brooks, 1999, pp. 8-9; Smith, 2008, pp. 82-91). We decided to solve this problem by stating that the reparation which was asked for by the transgressed group will be offered. The operationalization of all apologetic components is displayed in Table 3.

For a manipulation check of the components of apology it has to be tested if the content of the components of the PIAs is operationalized so that the subjective content corresponds with the objective one (cf. Schmitt et al., 2004). To attain this information we displayed the PIA the participants had read again after they had completed the dependent measures. Underneath the second display of the PIA the list of the 11 elementary components (cf. Table 3) was introduced with "How much were the following contents missing in the statement of the dean" (i.e., the PIA). The participants rated each component on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 "not missed at all" to 5 "missed a lot". Then we compared how much the participants missed each component when they were not part of the PIA to when they were (i.e., across conditions). If the content operationalized within a component is missed more when not present in the PIA compared to when present we can conclude that the content of the component is perceived as it was construed (cf. Kirchhoff et al., 2012).

### Dependent measures

**Acceptance of the apology and intergroup forgiveness.** Six items asked for the acceptance of the apology. All items started with "As a female student...". The items "...I am satisfied with the statement.", "...I perceive the statement as acceptable.", "...I

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perceive the statement as complete.”, and “...I perceive the statement as sincere.” were operationalized in accordance with a scale used by Blatz (2008, study 3). The items “...I accept the statement as an apology.” and “...I think that the statement contained everything that I wanted to hear.” were taken from Kirchhoff et al. (2012).

Intergroup forgiveness was measured with three items. Two items were operationalized similar to items by Čehajić et al. (2008): “As a female student I think female students should forgive the professors.” and “As a female student I am prepared to forgive the professors.” We added one further item, namely “As a female student I think it is right to forgive the professors.”

The items had to be rated on a 5-point scale ranging from “I do not agree at all” (1) to “I totally agree” (5). Due to the high correlations of the two scales ( $r = .64$ ,  $p < .01$ ), we tested if the constructs could be separated empirically by applying confirmatory factor analyses with MPlus 6 (Muthen & Muthen, 2010). A 2-factor model fitted the data significantly better than a 1-factor model ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 128.04$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .01$ ); thus acceptance of the apology (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .85$ ) and forgiveness ( $\alpha = .87$ ) were considered as two separate constructs.

**Intergroup anger.** Intergroup anger was surveyed with six items (cf. Tausch & Becker, 2012). The items were introduced by asking how the participants reacted to the speech. Four items were phrased “As a female student I am less angry [outraged, mad, raging] about the professors”. Two items started with “As a female student...” and said “the professors disgust me less.” as well as “...I abhor the professors less.” The items had to be rated on a scale ranging from “I do

not agree at all” (1) to “I totally agree” (5). Cronbach’s alpha of this scale was .93.

**Empowerment.** For measuring the perception of empowerment we used the four item scale by Shnabel et al. (2009) adapting it to the given context. The introductory phrase to the items read “Please rate how much the utterance of the dean conveyed the following contents.” The following items had to be rated on scales ranging from “I do not agree at all” (1) to “I totally agree” (5): “Female students have the right to be strong [have the right to a voice, need to be influential, can be proud of themselves].” Cronbach’s alpha of this scale was .92.

## Results

The manipulation of both, the severity of the transgression and the components of the apology, was successful. The participants rated the severity of the more severe scenario higher ( $M = 6.13$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) than of the less severe scenario ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 1.96$ ;  $t(287) = -12.98$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Regarding the content of the PIAs it was tested if the components of apology were perceived as they were constructed. Across all components of apology  $t$ -tests revealed that a component was missed less when present in the displayed text than when it was not part of the apology (all  $p$  values  $> .01$ ; cf. Table 4). This supports that the objective contents of the PIAs corresponded to the subjective ones.

We conducted a MANOVA with acceptance of the apology and intergroup forgiveness as dependent variables. We included a planned contrast analysis (orthogonal difference contrasts that compare each category to the mean effect of all previous categories) because the

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comparison of more complete PIAs to PIAs including fewer components was of interest for H1 and H2. The means are depicted in Figure 1a and 1b.

**Testing H1.** The first hypothesis, that a PIA with more of the relevant components is more successful than PIAs including less of these components, was supported. The overall results of the MANOVA revealed a significant effect of number of components in the apology (Pillai's trace = .08,  $F(8, 558) = 2.81$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ). The separate univariate ANOVAs depicted that the effect of the components of apology particularly applied to the acceptance of the apology ( $F(4, 279) = 4.66$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ ) rather than to intergroup forgiveness ( $F(4, 279) = 2.35$ ,  $p = .06$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ ). The contrast analysis included in the MANOVA showed that the comparison of the 5-component PIA ( $M = 2.75$ ,  $SD = .92$ ) and the PIAs including less components (4 components:  $M = 2.39$ ,  $SD = .92$ ; 3 components:  $M = 2.11$ ,  $SD = .92$ ; 2 components:  $M = 2.22$ ,  $SD = .96$ ) reached significance ( $p < .01$ ) for the acceptance of the apology, which does not apply to intergroup forgiveness. The remaining contrasts did not reach significance (all  $p$  values  $> .08$ , cf. Table 5).

**Testing H2.** H2 purported that H1 particularly applies to transgressions of higher severity. The MANOVA revealed that while the main effect of the severity of transgression (Pillai's trace = .04,  $F(2, 278) = 5.53$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ) on the dependent measures did reach significance, the interaction of number of components and the severity of transgression did not (Pillai's trace = .02,  $F(8, 558) = .63$ ,  $p = .70$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ ). The univariate ANOVAs revealed that the

severity of the transgression had a significant effect on intergroup forgiveness ( $F(1, 279) = 9.44$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ ;  $M_{\text{low}} = 3.18$ ,  $SD = .96$ ,  $M_{\text{high}} = 2.81$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) but not on the acceptance of the apology ( $F(1, 279) = .87$ ,  $p = .35$ ,  $\eta^2 < .01$ ;  $M_{\text{low}} = 2.47$ ,  $SD = .93$ ,  $M_{\text{high}} = 2.34$ ,  $SD = .99$ ). Yet, the pattern of means suggested that the significant contrast, which compared the 5-component PIA to PIAs including less components, was bigger in the condition of higher severity ( $M_{\text{diff}} = .69$ ) than in the one of lower severity ( $M_{\text{diff}} = .35$ , cf. Figure 1a). In addition, the analysis of this contrast for both the high and the low severity condition separately, revealed that the difference was only marginally significant in the low severity condition ( $p = .06$ ), but significant in the high severe condition ( $p < .01$ ). However, an ANOVA with the severity of transgression and the contrast comparing the 5-component PIA to the PIAs including less content, showed no significant interaction for the acceptance of the apology ( $F(1, 232) = 1.47$ ,  $p = .23$ ,  $\eta^2 < .01$ ). Thus, the results show a favorable pattern with regard to H2, while not substantially supporting it.

**Testing H3 and H4.** Hypotheses H3 and H4 expected the effects of the content of PIAs on the acceptance of the apology and intergroup forgiveness to be mediated by a reduction in intergroup anger and the perception of a message of empowerment. The only significant effect of the PIA's content on the dependent measures was found when comparing the 5-component PIA with PIAs including less content. Thus, we could only test the mediation for this relationship. The bivariate correlations revealed that neither the perception of empowerment ( $r = .03$ ,  $p = .63$ ) nor the reduction of anger ( $r = .12$ ,  $p = .11$ ) was

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affected by the contrast which compared the 5-component PIA with those including less content. Thus none of the two variables were suitable for mediation analysis (cf. Baron & Kenny, 1986).

### Discussion

The results of Study 1 supported the first hypothesis that the components of a PIA do have an impact on the effectiveness of the PIA. A PIA including more of the components identified as relevant was more successful than PIAs including less of these components. This effect of the PIA's content applied predominantly to the acceptance of the apology, whereas the increase of intergroup forgiveness was only marginally significant. The relevant difference between different PIAs appeared when comparing the PIA including five components to those PIAs including fewer components. For the given context this meant that a PIA that included the five components naming the transgression, a statement of apology (IFID), taking responsibility, promising forbearance, and conveying emotions was more successful than PIAs including only two, three or all of the five components except for the component conveying emotions. The addition of further components to the 5-component PIA did not further increase the effectiveness of the PIA. There was also some support for our second hypothesis that the content of a PIA impacts on their effectiveness particularly in the aftermath of a more severe transgression. Even though not significant, the difference between the 5-component PIA and those including fewer components seemed to be more profound in the high severity than in the low severity condition. Neither the reduction of

intergroup anger nor the perception of empowerment was identified as a mediator variable for the relationship between the PIA's content and the acceptance of the PIA.

The results suggest that the component conveying emotions in the 5-component PIA had a particular strong effect on the acceptance of the apology when the PIA was compared to less complete PIAs which do not include the component conveying emotions. This finding is not in line with literature which has put forward that for PIAs emotions might not play a crucial role (Govier & Verwoerd, 2002; Griswold, 2007, p. 188; Tavuchis, 1991, p.109). The finding is also not in line with previous experimental research on PIAs, which has suggested that expressing emotions in PIAs is not effective. However, those previous studies have focused primarily on intergroup forgiveness as a marker of success and not the acceptance of the apology (Philpot & Hornsey, 2008, study 4; Wohl et al., 2012, study 4). Indeed, Philpot and Hornsey (2008, study 4) also included a scale on the satisfaction with the response which did not result in significant results when comparing PIAs of varying emotionality. Yet, as mentioned before (cf. theoretical background), the manipulation of emotions which Philpot and Hornsey (2008, study 4) applied seemed to be quite overloaded what makes it difficult to clearly interpret the effect. In our study the operationalization of the PIA's components was more systematical.

### STUDY 2

Study 1 revealed that a PIA which included more of the relevant components of apology was more successful than one including less

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of these components. There was also some even though not substantial support that this particularly applied after a more severe transgression. The question remains if the finding that the content of PIAs impacts on their effectiveness also applies to extremely severe intergroup transgressions. A setting that allows for this analysis can be found in cases of PIAs that are offered for severe historical acts. The goal of Study 2 was to analyze our hypotheses in a post-war society.

**Research context.** Study 2 analyzed PIAs in the context of post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Between 1992 and 1995 all major ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats) in BiH were fighting a war against each other (Malcom, 2002, pp. 254-255). The percentage of experienced war cruelties was the highest among the non-Serbian population (Zwierzchowski & Tabeau, 2010). BiH can still be described as a divided society as its ethnic groups have not yet finally overcome their separation (Zupan, 2007). Today 48% Bosniaks, 14% Croats, 37% Serbs and 0.6% other ethnic groups live in BiH (CIA World Factbook, 2012; for the year 2000). Analyzing the effect of PIAs in BiH is particularly interesting because attempts to apologize for war atrocities have been undertaken but have so far been regarded as unsuccessful (Franović, 2008). A debate about PIAs in BiH took place in 2010: The national assembly of the republic of Serbia had passed a resolution concerning the mass killings of Bosniaks by Serbs in Srebrenica 1995, which had been defined as an act against the genocide convention (Bohnet & Gold, 2010). The resolution was labeled as an apology in the local media, but critically discussed as neither Bosniaks nor Serbs were

satisfied with it. Whereas many Serbs feared a one-sided perpetrator image to be maintained, many Bosniaks were not satisfied with the particular content of the PIA (Nikčević, 2010; Bohnet & Gold, 2010).

### Method

**Sample.** Participants were recruited via several mailing lists and individual contacts we had access to in BiH (May/June 2012). Out of 171 participants 110 participants were included in the data set. Sixty-one people were not included because 52 participants did not complete the relevant dependent measures, six did not live in BiH and three gave statements in the sections for open-comments suggesting misinterpretation of items or the study's framework. The majority of the participants had a high educational background (21 students, 52 people with a university degree or in jobs which require a university degree). We surveyed people independent of their ethnic group, based on two reasons. Firstly, in most escalated conflicts both sides tend to perceive themselves as being victimized (Montiel, 2002, p. 273). Secondly, critics state that in the context of the war in BiH there needs to be research that encompasses all people independent of their ethnic group (Franović, 2008). Of the 110 people 48 defined themselves as Bosnians, 25 as Serbs, 25 as Bosniaks, 5 as Croats, and 8 people did not confine themselves to one of these categories. The sample consisted of 72 females, 36 males, and three people who did not offer information on their gender. The mean age was 31.03 years ( $SD = 8.97$ ).

**Procedure.** We conducted an online vignette study. Design and procedure were

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similar as introduced for Study 1, but based on a pretest we had to drop the severity manipulation (s. below). Participants were welcomed and asked to report demographic information (age, job, place of living, ethnic group). Afterwards they read a statement that the following questions refer to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995). Then participants were told to imagine that they are present at a public speech given by a representative of another group (ethnic outgroup). This speech included one of five differently phrased PIAs. Subsequently the dependent measures of interest (i.e., the acceptance of the apology, intergroup forgiveness, reduction of intergroup anger, and perceived empowerment) had to be completed. Then participants had to answer how much they had missed the displayed components within the PIA (manipulation check). Finally there was the opportunity to leave comments on the study. The participants were thanked and debriefed.

The original questionnaire and its items had to be translated from German to the local language which is Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (BCS; we chose only a Latin version and refrained from having a Cyrillic one). The translation process was conducted in line with the TRAPD Modell by Harkness (2003). First, two German translators translated the original questionnaire into BCS. Then, a certificated translator from BiH evaluated the two translations comparing them with the original questionnaire; together we decided which translation to choose. Changes in the independent and dependent measures in comparison to Study 1 are reported below.

**Independent Measures.** Based on a pretest with 29 participants recruited via a

mailing list, changes to the two independent variables had to be applied. Of the 29 participants in the pretest five declared themselves as Bosniaks, two as Croats nine as Serbs, ten as Bosnians, and three did not confine themselves to one of these groups. The mean age was 31.28 years ( $SD = 8.58$ ). Nineteen participants were females, eight males, and two people did not give information on their gender.

**Severity of the transgression.** Severity was not varied in Study 2. Reasons for this were the results from the pretest. In the pretest participants were asked to rate the severity of two different statements that – after a long discussion with experts of the region – were chosen for two scenarios which could be considered as a more and a less severe transgression in the context of the war in BiH (1992-1995). One statement referred to the destruction of monuments and the other to the killings of civilians. The items for testing the perception of the severity (manipulation check) were the same as in Study 1 ( $\alpha = .65$ ). As no significant difference between the high ( $M = 5.6$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ) and the low ( $M = 6.22$ ,  $SD = .94$ ) severity condition was found ( $F(1, 22) = 1.18$ ,  $p = .29$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ ) the manipulation of the severity of transgression was dropped. Instead the two conditions were combined to one condition, which said: “The context to which the following questions refer is: In BiH people from another group have destroyed cultural monuments and killed civilians of the group to which you belong.”

**Components of apology.** The content of the PIAs was varied in five versions. The selection of these versions is described in the following. Research on the 14 components of apology (cf. Table 1) is sparse, thus we conducted a pretest to check for their relevance for the given context as we did for

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Study 1. The participants were asked to imagine that the representatives of another group have decided to give a public speech on crimes committed during the war in BiH by the group they represent. Afterwards they were asked to rate the importance of the 14 displayed components that could possibly accompany an apology given by a representative of that group within the speech [5-point scale, “not important at all to be included”(1) - “very important to be included”(5)]. We also asked participants to indicate which of the components do not have to be included in the apology at all (no scale, it was possible to check each item). The results of the pretest are displayed in Table 6.

For the operationalization of the five PIAs we considered all 14 components of apology, because in the pretest there was no significant difference when applying one-sample *t*-tests across the ranking of the importance of the 14 components between one component and the next one (all *p* values > .05; cf. Table 6).

The first PIA we operationalized included two components. Just as in Study 1 these were the component naming the transgression and the statement of apology (IFID), because they received the highest means for the importance rating (cf. Table 6). We kept these two components constant in our apology manipulation like we did in Study 1. The second, third, and fourth PIA included either three, four or five components. To the basic PIA including two components we consecutively added the components admitting a norm violation, addressing suffering, and praising the outgroup in order of their importance rating. The fifth PIA included all 14 components. This way we could test if the remaining

seven components have an additional effect on the dependent measures when compared to PIAs including a variation of the five components rated as more important in the pretest.

The five versions of the PIAs are displayed in Table 7. All PIAs were introduced by stating that the following statement is an extract of a public speech, which was broadcasted on television. It was said that the speech addressed the group the participant belongs to and that it was given by an official representative of another group. The participants read that the representatives of that group had agreed on the importance of addressing the public.

***Operationalization of components in the PIAs.*** The phrasing of the components was in accordance with Study 1. We had to apply only some adaptations. The operationalization of the components naming the transgression, addressing suffering, and the reparation offer as well as praising the outgroup was adapted to the new context. In addition the three components not operationalized in Study 1 had to be implemented. These were the components praising the current system, saying something positive about the ingroup and dissociating the injustice from the current system. Due to the distinct context of the experiment the operationalization of these components was quite straightforward. The operationalization of all components is displayed in Table 7. The manipulation check of the components was conducted as we did in Study 1, by testing if the subjective content of the components in the PIA corresponded with the objective one.

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**Dependent measures.** The same items as in Study 1 were used, only this time referring to “member(s) of my group” or “member(s) of the other group”.

**Acceptance of the apology and intergroup forgiveness.** The six items of the scale measuring the acceptance of the apology build a reliable scale (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .92$ ). Same applied to the scale of intergroup forgiveness with its three items ( $\alpha = .92$ ). However, due to high correlation of the two scales ( $r = .63, p < .01$ ) we applied confirmatory factor analysis in MPlus 6 (Muthen & Muthen, 2010). The Chi-square difference for the one- and the two-factor solution was significant ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 109.09, df = 1, p < .01$ ); thus we considered acceptance of the apology and intergroup forgiveness as two separate constructs.

**Intergroup anger and empowerment.** The six items of the anger scale ( $\alpha = .97$ ) and the four items of the empowerment scale ( $\alpha = .88$ ) were reliable.

### Results

The manipulation check revealed that the operationalization of the components of apology was successful. It was tested if the components were perceived as they were constructed. Across all apology components,  $t$ -tests revealed that a component was missed less when it was present in the displayed text than when it was not part of the PIA (all  $p$  values  $< .05$ ; cf. Table 8). Hence, it was supported that the subjective accounts of the components corresponded to the operationalization of the components. Gender ( $r = .05; p = .63$ ), age ( $r = .13, p = .16$ ), and ethnicity ( $r = -.05, p = .62$ ) did not correlate with the independent measure

components of apology and were hence dropped from further analysis.

**Testing H1.** The MANOVA with acceptance of the apology and intergroup forgiveness as dependent measures revealed that there was no significant effect of number of components in the PIA (Pillai’s trace = .08,  $F(8, 206) = 1.00, p = .44, \eta^2 = .04$ ). For none of the univariate ANOVAs we found a significant effect of the components in the PIA on the dependent measure (acceptance of apology:  $F(4, 103) = 1.31, p = .34, \eta^2 = .04$ ; forgiveness:  $F(4, 103) = 1.26, p = .47, \eta^2 = .03$ ). However, the included analysis of the contrasts (orthogonal difference contrasts) in the MANOVA showed that for the dependent measure acceptance of the apology the contrast between the 4-component PIA and the PIAs including less components reached significance ( $M_{diff} = .59; p = .05$ ), same did not apply to intergroup forgiveness. According to the methodological argumentation on the interpretation of orthogonal contrasts by Kirk (1968, p. 110), the significant contrast can be interpreted even though the overall  $F$ -value was not significant. All other repeated contrasts for any of the dependent measures were not significant (all  $p$  values  $> .16$ , cf. Table 9). Thus, there was some support for H1 which suggests that the inclusion of more relevant components in a PIA is more effective than PIAs including fewer of these components. The means for the measure acceptance of the apology depending on the content of the PIA are depicted in Figure 2a and b.

**Testing H3 and H4.** Hypotheses H3 and H4 expected the effects of the PIA’s content on the acceptance of the apology and intergroup forgiveness to be mediated by a



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reduction in intergroup anger and the perception of a message of empowerment. We found no significant effect of the components of the PIAs, when comparing the 4-component PIA with PIAs including less content, on the expected mediator variables intergroup anger ( $r = .02$ ,  $p = .85$ ) and empowerment ( $r = .02$ ,  $p = .86$ ). Hence, no mediation analysis for this relationship was undertaken (cf. Baron & Kenny, 1986).

### Discussion

The results of Study 2 offered some support for our hypothesis that a PIA including more of the relevant components was more successful than PIAs including less of these components. The effect of the PIA's content only applied to its acceptability and not to intergroup forgiveness as was found in Study 1. The effect of the PIA on their acceptance differed significantly in the comparison of the 4-component PIA and those including fewer components. In the given context this meant that a PIA including the four components naming the transgression, a statement of apology (IFID), admitting norm violation, and addressing suffering was more successful than PIAs including two or all of the four components except for the component addressing suffering. The addition of further components to the PIA including four components was not successful. Neither intergroup anger nor the perception of empowerment could be identified as mediator variables for the relationship between the PIA's content and the acceptance of the PIA.

The results suggest that the component addressing suffering in the 4-component PIA had a particular strong effect on the

acceptance of the apology when the PIA was compared to less complete PIAs that did not include the component addressing suffering. This finding is supported by arguments brought up in the literature. Authors have emphasized that it is important for an apology to address concern for the predicament or suffering caused by the transgression (Blatz et al., 2009; Govier & Verwoerd, 2002; Lazare, 2004, p. 75). Thompson (2008) even writes that some victims demand nothing more but acknowledgement of their suffering. Nevertheless, it also seems reasonable that it is not the only component in a successful PIA. Merely addressing that the transgression caused suffering without stating that the transgression itself was a norm-violation can mean that the apologizing group is not taking full responsibility for what happened (cf. Kampf, 2008). Furthermore, there is research suggesting that in the aftermath of prolonged conflict, that involves violence from both groups against each other, it might be particularly relevant to address the suffering of the other group. With their concept of competitive victimhood Noor, Shnabel, Halabi, and Nadler (2012) suggest that groups that have been involved in prolonged conflict tend to compete with each other over the status of victimhood. As Study 2 took place in the context of BiH where the ethnic groups have not yet finally overcome their separation after the war between 1992 and 1995 (Zupan, 2007) it appears reasonable that the acknowledgement of the suffering of the group to which the apology is addressed was revealed as particularly important for a PIA within Study 2.

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**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

The overarching goal of our studies was to scrutinize which content of PIAs has an impact on their effectiveness. Blatz (2008, study 1), Philpot and Hornsey (2008, study 4) as well as Wohl et al. (2012, study 4) have conducted research on the components of PIAs. However, none of these previous studies have scrutinized the impact of the PIA's content on its effectiveness as systematically as we did in our studies (cf. theoretical background). We predicted that the inclusion of more relevant components of apology by Blatz et al. (2009) and Kirchhoff et al. (2012) for a given context significantly increases the effectiveness of a PIA when compared to PIAs including less of these components. We suggested that the latter applies in particular after more severe transgressions. In addition, we wanted to identify mediator variables that could explain the relationship between the content of PIAs and their acceptance or intergroup forgiveness by the victimized. In line with theoretical assumptions we focused on the analysis of the potential mediator variables intergroup anger and perceived empowerment.

Study 1 supported that a PIA including more of the relevant components of apology leads to more acceptance of the speech act than PIAs including less of these components. The same did not apply to intergroup forgiveness, which is not surprising due to the issues stemming from the concept of intergroup forgiveness (cf. theoretical background). For the hypothesis that the content of PIAs contributes to their effectiveness in particular in the aftermath of more severe transgressions some, even though not substantial, support was found.

Study 2 analyzed the content of PIAs in the aftermath of extremely severe transgressions during war time. The study also revealed that the components of a PIA increased the acceptance of the apology but not intergroup forgiveness. Yet, what components had to be included in the PIA in order to increase their acceptance differed across Study 1 and 2. In Study 1 a PIA including the five components naming the transgression, statement of apology (IFID), taking responsibility, promising forbearance, and conveying emotions was decisively accepted more than PIAs including only some (two or three) or all of the five components without the conveyance of emotions. In Study 2 an effect on the acceptance of the PIA was found, when comparing a PIA which included the four components naming the transgression, statement of apology (IFID), admitting norm violation, and addressing suffering to PIAs including some (two) or all of the four components but the addressing of suffering. The fact that type and number of components as part of the PIAs which increased the effectiveness of the apology varied across contextual variables (type of transgression, culture) is in line with assumptions within the non-empirical literature on PIAs (Coicaud & Jönsson, 2008; Griswold, 2007, p. 155).

In both studies some of the components of apology did not have a relevant effect on increasing the acceptance of the PIA. The latter finding has to be interpreted cautiously, because the components were always added to a set of components. Thus, we cannot conclude irrevocably that the components that did not seem to increase the apology's effectiveness are not effective if analyzed separately. This applies even

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more to the components that were not found to be effective and were only included in the PIAs that included all of the components that had been identified as relevant for the given contexts in the pretests (Study 1, 11 components, cf. Table 2; Study 2, 14 components, cf. Table 6). These two PIAs included not only one but at least six components more than the PIAs they were compared to. Similarly it applies that when we added a component to set of different components and found an increase in the depended variables it is not totally clear if it was the addition of the added component or the particular combination of components that was effective. In addition, it was not feasible to test all possible combinations of the components of apology, hence we cannot infer if some combinations of elements which we did not test are more effective than others.

For both studies neither the perception of empowerment nor the reduction of intergroup anger could be identified as mediator variables for the relationship between the content of a PIA and its acceptance. However, we cannot conclude that a PIA in general does not affect the proposed mediator variables when contrasting it with a condition in which after a transgression no apology is given at all. In addition, further mediator variables of the relationship between the content of PIAs and their acceptance should be considered. Examples for other possible mediator variables are empathy for the perpetrating group or intergroup trust, because these concepts have been shown to mediate the relationship between contact and forgiveness (Čehajić et al., 2008; Čehajić, Brown, & González, 2009).

**Shortcomings of our studies.** We already stated three shortcomings of our studies, namely that we did not analyze the components of the PIAs separately or test for the effects of all possible combinations, and that we did not analyze a no-apology condition. There are further overarching shortcomings that have to be stated explicitly.

The format of the studies' design did not allow for the PIAs to be dialogical. Even though we pretested the importance of a given set of possible components the process of uttering and receiving a PIA as such did not allow for a dialogue between the two groups. It can be concluded from the results of our studies that such a dialogue might be crucial. When the question of what content needs to be included in a PIA is decisive but depends on contextual variables pre-apology dialogue can help the story. Indeed, researchers purport that it is of particular importance that in the realm of intergroup settings the development of a public apology is not a unilateral project but should rather involve both sides interacting with each other (Barkan & Karn, 2006; Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Iyer & Blatz, 2012; Thompson, 2008; Myers et al., 2009). Moreover, a PIA of course might just mark the beginning of a bilateral interaction process that in the end might lead to reconciliation (Hatch, 2006; Iyer & Blatz, 2012). This process might also include that apologies from individuals are promoted as they can be important in addition to PIAs (Coicaud & Jönsson, 2008; Smith, 2008; pp. 176-196; Wohl et al., 2011).

Some might also criticize the rather simple and very formal phrasing of the PIAs. The simple phrasing was chosen in order to trace back the impact of the components in the

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PIAs on the measurements of effectiveness to their central semantic content. And indeed, PIAs tend to be phrased more formal and precise than it might be the case in interpersonal apologies, because a broader language leaves room for interpretation and increases ambiguities (Smith, 2008, p. 166). Especially in cases of large-scale crimes issues arise when phrasing a PIA, for example about which particular harms or injuries should be addressed (Smith, 2008, p. 169). This again underlines that the process of phrasing and choosing the content of a PIA should not be a unilateral undertaking.

In addition, non-verbal attributes such as facial expressions may contribute to the effectiveness of a PIA. The way how the PIA is communicated very likely contributes to its effectiveness (Barkan & Karn, 2006; Wohl et al., 2011). An example of an impressive apologetic act without even using any words at all is the “Kniefall” by the German chancellor Willy Brandt in December 1970 (Nobles, 2008, p. 6). Within our research design we did not operationalize non-verbal attributes of a PIA. Hence, we cannot conclude about their contribution to the perception of PIAs.

It also needs to be critically referred to the perpetrator-victim-dichotomy suggested in the design of the experiments. This dichotomy of course has consequences for a process towards reconciliation that need to be accounted for. This is for example the possibility of a depoliticization of the process because neither victims nor perpetrators tend to be perceived as political actors (Shaw & Waldorf, 2010, pp. 8-10). In the intergroup context of very severe conflicts such as the war in BiH (1992-1995) holding up such a dichotomy can be particularly detrimental to the reconciliation process

(Franović, 2008). Moreover, research explicitly from the perspective of those being associated with the victimized group cuts short on the fact that a PIA is evaluated also from the perspective of those perceiving it whilst being associated with the perpetrating group. The latter might possibly change how a PIA is phrased in order to be acceptable for both sides (Blatz, 2008; Iyer & Blatz, 2012; Smith, 2008, p. 165).

When researching on PIAs some possible drawbacks of the concept as such should be mentioned. When planning a PIA it needs to be considered if the benefits arising are worth the potential risks a PIA might entail (Blatz, 2008, p. 13; Coicaud & Jönsson, 2008). Possible risks are the normalization of crime or an undermining of justice when a PIA is seen as an easy way out of receiving punishment for transgressions (Coicaud & Jönsson, 2008; Exline, 2003). Increased negative attitudes towards the outgroup also might occur. Harth, Hornsey, and Barlow (2011) for example have shown an increase in racism if the PIA was rejected by those receiving it. Further problems arise when a PIA is given to a group that experiences ongoing social injustice. Concerning intergroup contact it has been discussed that when it improves the views of the majority held by the minority this could actually hinder necessary social change (Dixon, Tropp, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2011). Thus, when a PIA improves the perception of the apologizing group it might stop the receiving group from mobilizing against the ongoing injustice. Nevertheless, this only underlines how important it is that a PIA is carefully crafted and implemented as a moral statement, which also questions the status quo (cf. Govier & Verwoerd, 2002; Griswold, 2007, p. 151; Smith, 2008, p.233; Vines,

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2007). The possible drawbacks call for PIAs to be set within a broader and more comprehensive approach towards reconciliation including a post-apology engagement (Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Thompson, 2008; Wohl et al., 2011).

**Conclusion and further research.** The study at hand extends previous research on PIAs by focusing on the questions which content of PIAs is effective and why the content of PIAs impacts on their effectiveness. There are four main findings of our studies. Firstly, addressing the which-question, we found that the components of PIAs had an impact on the effectiveness of the PIA, which seemed to apply slightly more following a transgression of higher severity. Secondly, the crucial components were context-dependent. That meant that the combination and number of components in the apologies that were more successful than less complete apologies varied across studies. Thirdly, the results applied to the acceptability of the PIA and not to intergroup forgiveness. Fourthly, we did not find an answer to the why-question: The reduction of intergroup anger and the perception of a message of empowerment could not be identified as mediator variables, which would have explained the success of apologies depending on their content.

Despite the mentioned shortcomings of both studies, it is possible to consider the results in the framing of public apologies in the intergroup setting. Of course, the generalization of the results has to be applied carefully, as in both studies the sample was not a representative one and especially because context variables seem to considerably influence what content is acceptable for a PIA.

Definitely, further research has to be conducted to understand which content of apologies, why, and under what circumstances can contribute to reconciliation.

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### Tables and Figures

TABLE 1

*Components of Apology Based on Models of Blatz et al. (2009) and Kirchhoff et al. (2012)*

Component of Apology
1. Illocutionary force indicating device; short: Statement of apology (IFID), e.g., “we apologize”
2. Naming the transgression
3. Taking on responsibility
4. Conveying emotions
5. Addressing emotions and/or damage on behalf of the offended; Short: Addressing suffering
6. Admitting norm violation
7. Promising forbearance
8. Offering reparation
9. Attempting to explain the transgression
10. Asking for acceptance of the apology
11. Praising the outgroup <sup>a</sup> (i.e., “addressed group”)
12. Praising the ingroup <sup>b</sup> (i.e., “apologizing group”)
13. Praising the current system
14. Dissociating injustice from the current system

*Note.* The components 3 through 8 are included in both models, the components 1 and 2 are only part of the model by Kirchhoff et al. (2012), and the components 10 through 14 are only part of the model by Blatz et al. (2009).

a Blatz et al. (2009) label this component “praising the minority group”

b Blatz et al. (2009) label this component “praising the majority group”

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TABLE 2

*Means and Standard Deviations for the Importance Ratings of Components of Apology in a PIA and Ratings on the Component's Redundancy for the Scenario in the Pretest of Study 1*

Component of Apology	Mean (SD)	Redundant <sup>a</sup>
1. Naming the transgression	4.75 ( .61)	1
2. Statement of apology (IFID)	4.67 ( .65)	1
3. Taking responsibility	4.65 ( .57)	1
4. Promising forbearance	4.62 ( .58)	1
5. Conveying emotions (shame)	4.50 ( .93)	1
6. Attempting to explain the transgression	4.33 ( .87)	4
7. Admitting norm violation	4.08 (1.25)	3
8. Addressing suffering	3.65 (1.19)	6
9. Offering reparation	3.63 (1.31)	5
10. Asking for acceptance of the apology	3.46 (1.06)	5
11. Praising the outgroup	3.29 (1.23)	10
12. Dissociating injustice from the current system	2.63 (1.47)	11
13. Praising the ingroup	1.83 (1.01)	18
14. Praising the current system	1.79 (1.02)	15

*Note.* The first significant difference ( $t(23) = 2.65, p = .01$ ) of two mean ratings was found between the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> component by one-sample t-tests, which compared each component to the previous one.

<sup>a</sup> Number of participants that said the component does not have to be included at all in a PIA  
PIA = public intergroup apology

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TABLE 3

*The Variation of the Independent Measure "Components of Apology" in Study 1*

Component of Apology	Number of components included in the PIA				
	2	3	4	5	11
1. Naming the transgression	x	x	x	x	x
2. Statement of apology (IFID)	x	x	x	x	x
3. Taking responsibility		x	x	x	x
4. Promising forbearance			x	x	x
5. Conveying emotions (shame)				x	x
6. Attempting to explain the transgression					x
7. Admitting norm violation					x
8. Addressing suffering					x
9. Offering reparation					x
10. Asking for acceptance of the apology					x
11. Praising the outgroup					x

The complete PIA, containing 11 components, had the following wording:

"We professors apologize (2) that we discriminated female students on grounds of their gender a year ago (1). We take the responsibility for what happened (3). The female students are characterized by their outstanding skills (11). What happened is shameful (5) and a violation of prevalent norms (7). We brought about impairment to the female students (8). Only human failure can be offered as an explanation (6). We want to offer them the reparation offer the female students have requested (9). We promise that what happened will not be repeated (4). We hope that this apology can be accepted (10)."

Note. An "x" signals that the component is part of the PIA

PIA = public intergroup apology

KIRCHHOFF AND ČEHAJIĆ-CLANCY

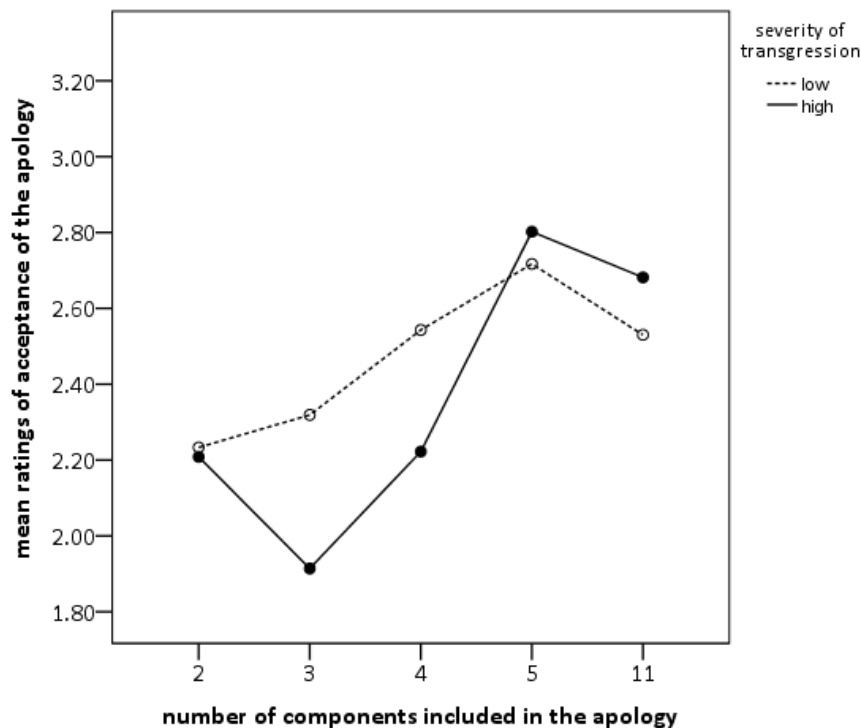


Figure 1a. Mean ratings of the acceptance of the apology depending on the number of components in the PIA and the severity of transgression in Study 1. PIA = public intergroup apology

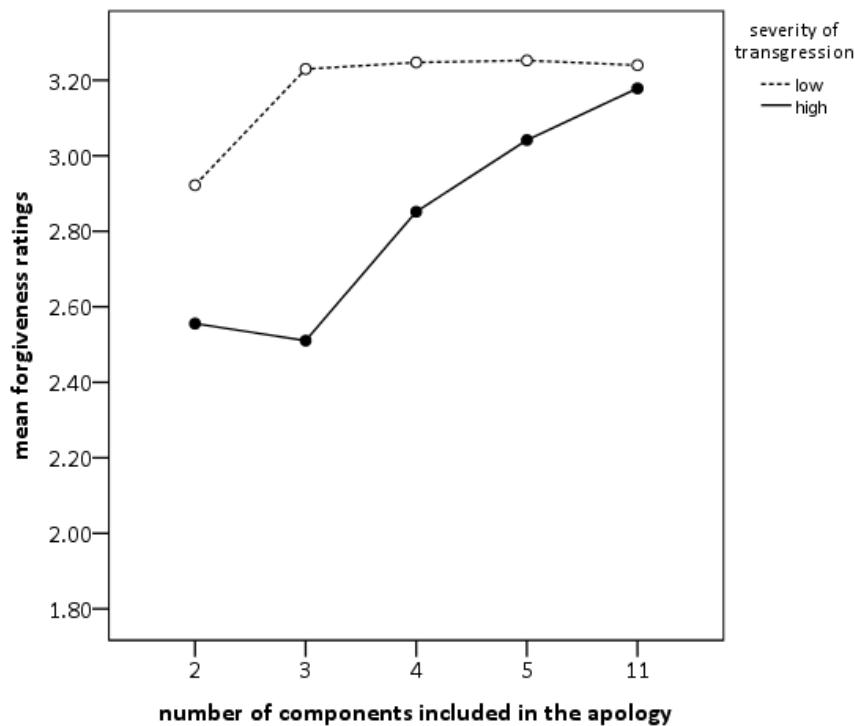


Figure 1b. Mean ratings of intergroup forgiveness depending on the number of components in the PIA and the severity of transgression in Study 1. PIA = public intergroup apology

## KIRCHHOFF AND ČEHAJIĆ-CLANCY

TABLE 4

*Manipulation Check for “Components of Apology” in Study 1: Ratings for Each Component as Being Missed When Included in the PIA Compared to When not Included*

Component of Apology	not included	included	T-Test
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	<i>t(df)</i>
1. Naming the transgression		3.20 (1.44)	-
2. Statement of apology (IFID)		1.86 (1.13)	-
3. Taking responsibility	3.48 (1.43)	2.34 (1.23)	5.72**(246)
4. Promising forbearance	4.43 (1.11)	2.01 (1.25)	15.80**(246)
5. Conveying emotions (shame)	3.87 (1.25)	2.31 (1.20)	9.71**(245)
6. Attempting to explain the transgression	4.46 (1.12)	3.83 (1.25)	3.36**(247)
7. Admitting norm violation	3.61 (1.34)	1.83 (1.02)	8.52**(247)
8. Addressing suffering	3.97 (1.25)	1.91 (1.13)	10.22**(244)
9. Offering reparation	4.38 (1.15)	2.43 (1.29)	10.12**(246)
10. Asking for acceptance of the apology	4.01 (1.22)	2.02 (1.27)	9.82**(246)
11. Praising the outgroup	4.31 (1.20)	2.56 (1.18)	8.89**(245)

*Note.* If a component is rated as being missed significantly more when not included in the PIA compared to when included in the PIA, it can be inferred that the subjective content of the PIA is similar to the objective one.

PIA = public intergroup apology

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

TABLE 5

*Effects of Difference Contrasts for the Components of Apology in the PIA on Acceptance of the Apology and Intergroup Forgiveness in Study 1*

Contrast for components of apology	Acceptance	Forgiveness
	Mean (Se), <i>p</i>	Mean (Se), <i>p</i>
3 components vs. less	-.10 (.17), .54	.13 (.18), .46
4 components vs. less	.21 (.15), .15	.25 (.16), .11
5 components vs. less	.52 (.14), .00	.26 (.15), .08
11 components vs. less	.24 (.14), .10	.26 (.15), .08

*Note.* PIA = public intergroup apology

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TABLE 6

*Means and Standard Deviations for the Importance Ratings of Components of Apology in a PIA and Ratings on the Component's Redundancy for the Scenario in the Pretest of Study 2*

Component of Apology	Mean (SD)	Redundant <sup>a</sup>
1. Statement of apology (IFID)	4.56 ( .85)	1
2. Naming the transgression	4.39 (1.23)	3
3. Admitting norm violation	4.21 (1.21)	3
4. Addressing suffering	4.11 (1.37)	2
5. Praising the outgroup	4.00 (1.27)	4
6. Asking for acceptance of the apology	4.00 (1.34)	6
7. Conveying emotions (shame)	3.96 (1.48)	6
8. Taking responsibility	3.82 (1.59)	1
9. Praising the current system	3.79 (1.48)	6
10. Praising the ingroup	3.75 (1.46)	7
11. Promising forbearance	3.66 (1.54)	10
12. Dissociating injustice from the current system	3.46 (1.43)	9
13. Attempting to explain the transgression	2.96 (1.64)	13
14. Offering reparation	2.75 (1.53)	12

*Note.* No significant differences were found when comparing each component to the previous one by one-sample t-tests (all  $p$  values > .05).

<sup>a</sup> Number of participants that said the component does not have to be included at all in a PIA.

PIA = public intergroup apology



## KIRCHHOFF AND ČEHAJIĆ-CLANCY

TABLE 7

*The Variation of the Independent Measure “Components of Apology” in Study 2*

Component of Apology	Number of components included in the PIA				
	2	3	4	5	14
1. Statement of apology (IFID)	x	x	x	x	x
2. Naming the transgression	x	x	x	x	x
3. Admitting norm violation		x	x	x	x
4. Addressing suffering			x	x	x
5. Praising the outgroup				x	x
6. Asking for acceptance of the apology					x
7. Conveying emotions (shame)					x
8. Taking on responsibility					x
9. Praising the current system					x
10. Praising the ingroup					x
11. Promising forbearance					x
12. Dissociating injustice from the current system					x
13. Attempting to explain the transgression					x
14. Offering reparation					x

The complete PIA, containing 14 components, had the following wording:

“We apologize (1), that we have destroyed cultural monuments and killed civilians of your group (2). What happened is a violation of prevalent norms (3). We have caused you suffering and damage (4). Your group is an important part of Bosnia and Herzegovina (5). We hope that this apology can be accepted (6). What happened is shameful (7). We take the responsibility for what happened (8). Our current societal system has improved (9). Our group is also an important part of Bosnia and Herzegovina (10). We promise that what happened will not be repeated (11). What happened occurred during the time of the war (12) and can only be explained with human failure (13). We want to offer you the compensation offer that is request by the victims’ organizations (14).”

Note. An “x” signals that the component is part of the PIA. PIA = public intergroup apology

## DOES IT MATTER WHAT THEY SAY?

TABLE 8

*Manipulation Check of “Components of Apology” in Study 2: Ratings for Each Component as Being Missed When Included in the PIA Compared to When not Included*

Component of Apology	not included	included	T-Test
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	<i>t(df)</i>
1. Statement of apology (IFID)	-	3.03 (1.46)	-
2. Naming the transgression	-	2.97 (1.40)	-
3. Admitting norm violation	3.41 (1.50)	2.62 (1.42)	2.05 (92)*
4. Addressing suffering	3.74 (1.45)	2.67 (1.53)	2.69 (92)**
5. Praising the outgroup	3.34 (1.23)	2.61 (1.41)	2.69 (92)**
6. Asking for acceptance of the apology	3.38 (1.22)	2.11 (1.10)	4.12 (89)**
7. Conveying emotions (shame)	3.53 (1.42)	2.35 (1.18)	3.43 (91)**
8. Taking responsibility	3.41 (1.33)	2.21 (1.44)	3.44 (90)**
9. Praising the current system	3.26 (1.37)	2.40 (1.23)	2.53 (91)**
10. Praising the ingroup	3.15 (1.31)	2.20 (1.32)	2.86 (90)**
11. Promising forbearance	3.65 (1.46)	1.95 (1.32)	4.72 (92)**
12. Dissociating injustice from the current system	3.39 (1.29)	1.84 (1.01)	4.90 (91)**
13. Attempting to explain the transgression	3.33 (1.48)	2.50 (1.28)	2.28 (91)*
14. Offering reparation	3.41 (1.57)	2.16 (1.38)	3.15 (89)**

Note. If a component is rated as being missed significantly more when not included in the PIA compared to when included in the PIA, it can be inferred that the subjective content of the PIA is similar to the objective one.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$

PIA = public intergroup apology

TABLE 9

*Effects of Difference Contrasts for the Components of Apology in the PIA on Acceptance of the Apology and Intergroup Forgiveness in Study 2*

Contrast	Acceptance	Forgiveness
	Mean (Se), <i>p</i>	Mean (Se), <i>p</i>
3 components vs. less	-.17 (.33), .61	-.09 (.36), .81
4 components vs. less	.59 (.29), .05	.40 (.32), .21
5 components vs. less	.06 (.27), .84	.06 (.29), .85
14 components vs. less	.01 (.25), .96	-.39 (.27), .16

Note. PIA = public intergroup apology

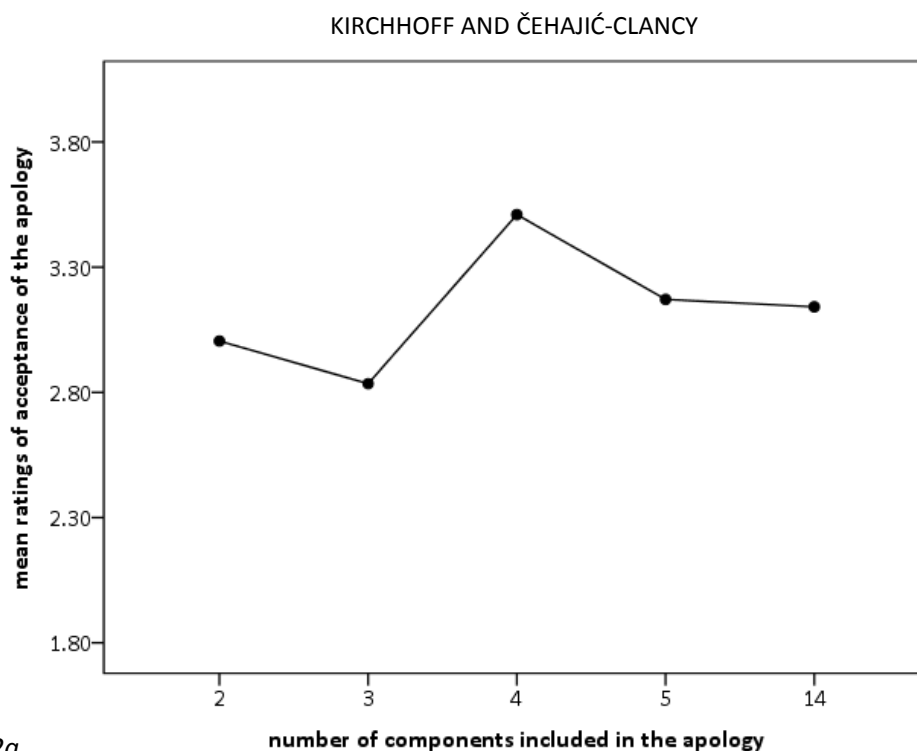


Figure 2a.

Mean ratings of the acceptance of apology depending on the number of components in the PIA in Study 2. PIA = public intergroup apology

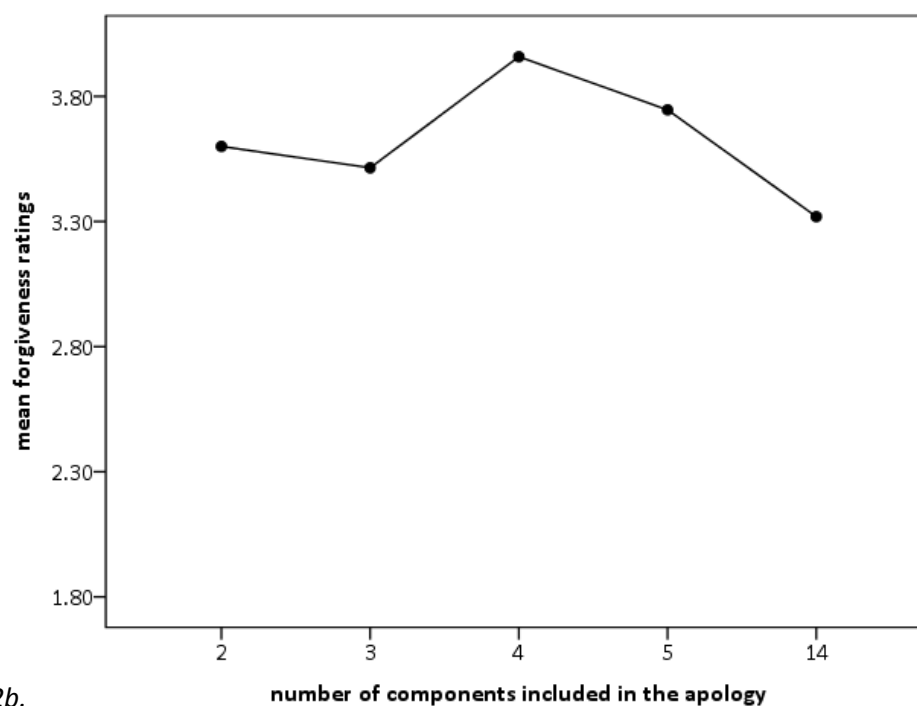


Figure 2b.

Mean ratings of intergroup forgiveness depending on the number of components in the PIA in Study 2. PIA = Public intergroup apology

**4. Manuscript 3:**

**The Needs of Victims: An Empirical Categorization.**

Johanna Kirchhoff, Micha Strack, & Ulrich Wagner (invited resubmission<sup>7</sup>)

Submission Date: 22.05.2012

Resubmission Date: 12.12.2012

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<sup>7</sup> At the time of the first submission of the dissertation (December 2012) the article had recently been submitted. At the time of the defence of the dissertation (March 2013), the article already had the status “invited resubmission”. The status was changed accordingly in this print version of the dissertation.

## The Needs of Victims: An Empirical Categorization

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As a consequence of interpersonal conflicts, needs of the victimized are violated. These needs have to be addressed in order to achieve reconciliation. Due to the heterogeneity of need categories in scholarly research we scrutinized which need categories can be empirically identified for victimized people by means of quantitative analysis. 478 participants were asked to report on an experienced interpersonal conflict. They answered 109 items evaluating the perceived need violation for the conflict they reported on. By means of explorative factor analysis with a random sub-sample ( $n_1 = 239$ ) six need categories were extracted. These are the need for respect, the need for meaning, the need for acceptance, the need for leisure, the need for achievement and the need for safety. Confirmatory factor analyses showed that these needs replicated across the second random sub-sample ( $n_2 = 239$ ) as well as across sub-samples with people that had experienced a conflict of lower severity of transgression ( $n_A = 257$ ) or higher severity of transgression ( $n_B = 221$ ). In addition it was shown that each of the need categories mediated the relationship between the severity of transgression and the desire for revenge. Yet, the results for the two need categories leisure and safety have to be interpreted with caution due to a lack of scalar invariance. Implications for conflict transformation and further scholarly inquiries are discussed.

Keywords: needs, need violation, need categories, need assessment, conflict resolution

### Introduction

Over the past fifty years victims of crime have gained a more central position within the setting of criminal justice (Simmonds, 2009). Accordingly, societal and scholarly interest on the needs of victimized people has increased (cf. Kiza, Rathgeber, & Rohne, 2006; Simmonds, 2009). In recent years the European Parliament has even brought forward a proposal on establishing standards for the rights as well as the support and protec-

tion of victims of crime. The proposal aims at strengthening the support for victims of crime in terms of their special needs (cf. European Commission, 2011). Furthermore, other than 25 years ago today it is common that mental health practitioners offer need-oriented support to people that have been victimized — not only in cases of extreme but also every day violence (cf. Fassin & Rechtman, 2009, pp. 4-5). The underlying idea of strengthening approaches that are aware of the needs of victimized people is

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not only to contribute to justice restoration (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008) and reconciliation after a conflict has taken place (Staub, 2003) but also to improve the standing of the powerless in civil society (cf. Max-Neef, Elizalde, & Hopenhayn, 1991). The neglect of the needs of victimized thus can hinder the forthcoming of social justice and reconciliation (cf. e.g., Janoff-Bulman & Werther, 2008; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008).

It is assumed that the relevant needs of victims differ from those of people in other situations (Simmonds, 2009). But what are the needs that can be identified as being relevant for victims? The categorization of human needs in the previous literature has been vast, and yet their empirical foundation has been considered to be particularly rare (cf. Max-Neef et al., 1991; Obrecht, 2005). The latter also applies to the categorizations of the needs of victims (Simmonds, 2009). To add to previous studies we referred to previous need categories and developed a survey on violated needs in the aftermath of interpersonal conflict. By means of the survey we asked people to report on violated needs after having experienced an interpersonal conflict in which they felt being victimized. The empirical data was then quantitatively analyzed. Furthermore, we wanted to analyze the importance of addressing the extracted violated needs of victimized people for conflict resolution. Accordingly, we also empirically explored the link between violated needs of the victimized and their desire for revenge.

### Theoretical Background

Humans have basic, shared needs that can be violated as a consequence of interpersonal conflict (Staub, 2003). The violated needs of the parties in conflict have to be addressed in order to achieve reconciliation (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Staub, 2003). Interventions to achieve reconciliation that focus on the victimized include symbolic interventions such as apologies and material ones such as reparations (cf. Staub, 2003; Stubbs, 2007). It is assumed that these interventions address the violated needs of the victimized (Lazare, 2004, p. 242; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Nevertheless, what needs of the victimized are violated as a consequence of an interpersonal conflict is a question that has not yet been sufficiently empirically analyzed (Simmonds, 2009).

To answer the question which needs of victims are usually violated as a consequence of interpersonal conflict, one could confine to need categories that are considered in previous literature. However, the confining process proves to be challenging because the suggested need categories are very heterogeneous (Max-Neef et al., 1991; Obrecht, 2005). Furthermore, we considered it to be important to not only refer to need categories based on theoretical assumptions but also to test empirically which need categories are relevant for people that have been victimized. Thus, we referred to previous literature in order to develop a survey, based on which it can be tested by means of quantitative analysis whether the suggested needs are violated on behalf of victims.

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We took into account five major need theories as well as need categories that have been suggested directly for victims in previous literature. The five major categorizations of needs are those suggested by Maslow (1970), Max-Neef et al. (1991), Murray (1938), Obrecht (2005), and Schwartz (1992).

The need theory by Maslow (1970) consisting of five needs (security, social, esteem, autonomy, and self-actualization needs) is the most popular one. Maslow's (1970) theory is widely accepted despite critics that reject a hierarchical order of needs, which Maslow (1970) suggested (Whaba & Bridwell, 1976).

Murray (1938) developed a categorization that has formed the basis for many other need theories (Costa & McCrae, 1988; Galliker, 2009, p. 174). His categorization can be subdivided into 12 viscerogenic needs (such as water and food) and 26 psychogenic needs (such as recognition, affiliation, order or autonomy; cf. Murray, 1938, pp. 77-83, see also Appendix A).

The categorizations by Max-Neef et al. (1991) with nine needs and by Obrecht (2005) with 17 needs are unique because they have chosen an interdisciplinary approach (Max-Neef et al., 1991) and an approach that integrates other need theories (Obrecht, 2005). Whereas Max-Neef et al. (1991) do not subdivide the suggested needs (subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity, and freedom) in further categories, Obrecht (2005) does so. He differentiates four biological needs (need for physical integrity, e.g., avoidance of exposition to violence; need for the autopoiesis necessary substitute

materials, e.g., water; need for regeneration, and need for sexual activity), six biopsychological needs (sensory needs, e.g., light; aesthetic needs, e.g., beautiful forms; need for variety, need for information relevant to orientation and action, need for subjective meaning, need for control and competence), and seven biopsychosocial needs (need to help others, need for distinctiveness, as well as needs for social recognition, for autonomy, for justice, for membership, and for love).

The fifth major categorization we took into account is the categorization by Schwartz (1992) of 11 human values (self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism), which can be referred to as needs (cf. Bilsky, 1999). Schwartz's (1992) categorization is interesting for our study, because it has already been established for quantitative empirical evaluation within standardized surveys in the European region (Schmidt, Bamberg, Davidov, Herrmann, & Schwartz, 2007).

Further, we referred to theoretical suggestions for need categories explicitly for victims (e.g., Frijda, 1994; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Tedeschi & Nesler, 1993, pp. 15-16). Writing about the gains of revenge Frijda (1994, pp. 281-282) names achievements at five levels, which can be referred to as motivations or needs that lead to vengeance. These five categories are the protection of further threat, the re-equilibration of gains and losses, the re-equilibration of the power-imbalance, the restoration of self-esteem (self-identity and self-efficacy), and affect regulation such as the relief of pain. Not

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writing about gains of revenge but about events that produce grievances in victims. Tedeschi and Nesler (1993, pp. 15-16) name four conditions which can be interpreted as needs of victims. These are a positive social identity, material safety, a need to have rights, and the absence of physical injury. Last but not least Shnabel and Nadler (2008) have introduced a need for empowerment to be particularly relevant for conflict resolution from the perspective of the victimized.

We also took into consideration reappearing suggestions for need violations as a consequence of conflict within scholarly research on reconciliation (e.g., Lazare, 2004, pp. 45-119; Smith, 2008, pp. 28-80; Ren & Grey, 2009; Robbennolt, 2008, pp. 202-226; Strang et al., 2006). The overarching goal of our study was to systematize recurring needs which might be violated concerning people victimized in interpersonal conflicts based on the quantitative analysis of empirical data. The study is, as far as we know, the first that realizes such intent.

**H1:** After interpersonal conflict distinct needs of the victimized can be identified, which replicate across random sub-samples.

Previous research has proposed and empirically underpinned the idea that needs can be considered as universal insofar that they apply across contexts (Maslow, 1970, p. 54; Schwartz et al., 1992; Staub, 2003). Accordingly, we assume that the needs of victimized people are not only applicable to different samples but also exist

independently of the triggering conflict's level of severity.

**H2:** The extracted need categories apply to conflicts of lower as well as to conflicts of higher severity.

Even though needs are considered to be consistent across context and cultures, the intensity of violated needs can vary. This is because the relative importance of specific needs can be influenced by contextual factors such as event valence, i.e., the severity of the transgression (Carroll, Arkin, Seidel, & Morris, 2009; Guan, Park, & Lee, 2009; Sheldon, Elliot, Kim, & Kasser, 2001). A change in the intensity of needs corresponds with a continuative concept of need fulfillment ranging from frustration to satisfaction (cf. Alderfer, 1969). Having information about which needs of victimized people are violated and to what extent can be considered to be relevant for forgiveness and reconciliation in the aftermath of interpersonal conflict. For interventions such as apologies that are implemented to promote forgiveness and to reduce the desire for revenge it is for example regarded as important that they address the violated needs of the victimized (Fehr & Gelfand, 2010; Lazare, 2004, p. 242; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Accordingly, Frijda (1994, p. 281) describes revenge as a behavior in order to address violated needs. Furthermore, it is intuitive and empirically supported that a higher severity of transgression has a more negative impact on forgiveness or the desire for revenge respectively (cf. Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010). In line with the



previous, we propose that the relationship between the severity of transgression and the desire for revenge can be explained by the intensity of need violations.

**H3:** The relationship between the severity of transgression and the desire for revenge is mediated by the intensity of need violations on behalf of the victimized.

To summarize, we expect that needs reoccur across random sub-samples of victimized people (H1). We further assume that even though the intensity of need violations differs for two further sub-samples that have experienced transgressions of higher or lower severity, the needs also replicate across these sub-samples (H2). In addition we want to research on the relevance of the information of violated needs for conflict resolution. Thus, we scrutinize whether or not the intensity of need violation can explain the relationship between the severity of a transgression and the desire for revenge by the victimized (H3).

### Method

**Sample.** The acquisition of the participants was carried out via several mailing lists and online platforms with German speaking participants. Out of 606 people that were willing to participate, 93 participants were defined as dropouts due to incomplete data sets. Another 35 were eliminated from the analysis, because they had chosen to report on a conflict from the perspective of the offender and not the victimized as it had

been asked for in the instruction. The remaining 478 (370 women; 108 men) participants were included in the analyses. On average, the participants were 29.80 years old ( $SD = 10.05$ ; range: 15 - 65). The majority of participants had a high educational background (452 people had a high school diploma).

**Procedure.** Designed as an online-questionnaire, the study was distributed via several mailing lists and was accessible to a German speaking public. In order to obtain a variety of conflicts for which participants rated the violation of their needs, each participant was told to recall an interpersonal conflict in which s/he felt that s/he had been the victim or inferior, ranging from low level to very severe experiences. First, participants were asked to write a short essay about the conflict they remembered in order to revive their memory. The participants were then asked to answer all subsequent items as if the incident had just happened. These were items on the perceived severity of the transgression, the perceived need violation, and the desire for revenge. Finally the participants had the chance to provide comments concerning the study. The format of the questionnaire required participants to answer all items.

### Measures

**Severity of the transgression.** The severity of transgression was surveyed with two items. The participants evaluated the items "I perceived the situation as [not so severe (1) – very severe (6)]" and "In the situation I

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perceived myself to be [very strong (1) – very weak (6)]” each on a 6-point rating scale. The Cronbach’s alpha of this scale was .52 ( $r = .36$ ).

**Need violations.** We screened the literature mentioned above for items that assess needs. Items from existing questionnaires were adapted to suit the format of the study at hand. The need category proposed by Shnabel and Nadler (2008) was assessed with items that they have introduced. The need categories introduced by Maslow (1970) were covered by items used by Porter (1961) as well as Arzberger, Murck, and Schumacher (1979). The need categories listed by Murray (1938) were assessed in accordance with items in the D-PRF (Stumpf et al., 1985) and additional items were designed<sup>1</sup>. Basic human values systematized by Schwartz (1992) relied on the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ by Schwartz et al. 2001; PVQ-21 by Schwartz, 2003). We designed additional items to assess need categories suggested in the literature on reconciliation (see above), as well as the ones mentioned by Frijda (1994), Max-Neef et al. (1991), and Obrecht (2005). Examples for need items in our study are: *“Because of the incident I*

*have the feeling that the person(s) question(s) my values.”* and *“The incident kept me from being modest and humble.”* The first item is operationalized in line with the tradition value by Schwartz (2001) and the second item in accordance with the need for identity as mentioned by Max-Neef et al. (1991). All other items were phrased in this pattern starting with “Because of the incident I had/have the feeling that...” or “The incident kept me from...”. Each of the resulting 109 items had to be evaluated by the participants on a 5-point scale ranging from “does not apply at all (1)” to “totally applies (5)”. The complete list of items is documented in Appendix A. In order to get an idea which need categories could possibly be revealed in the study, the 109 need items were grouped to 17 a priori need categories according to verbal descriptors (cf. Appendix A).

**Desire for revenge.** Participants were asked to complete seven self-designed items regarding their desire for revenge (5-point scale ranging from “does not apply at all (1)” to “does totally apply (5)”). These items were: “I can imagine to forgive the person(s) if s/he/they apologize(s) to me” (reverse-coded), “Because of what happened I want to punish the person(s)”, “Because of what happened the person(s) has/have to provide a compensation”, “I want to really tell the person(s) off”, “Because of what happened, I would really like to lambaste the person(s)”, “Because of what happened, I will arrange that it will be known what the person(s) did to me” and “Because of what happened, I will arrange that the person(s) will receive a

<sup>1</sup> The need for aggression mentioned by Murray (1938, pp. 80-83) was not operationalized due to the overlap with the dependent variable desire for revenge. Also the viscerogenic needs were not considered as detailed as in the theory by Murray (1938, p. 77) because categories such as lactation, urination or defecation were not considered relevant for the aim of our study. We only referred to the physical needs suggested by Maslow (1970) and Obrecht (2005).

bad reputation". The Cronbach's alpha of this scale was .70.

### Results

A qualitative manual content analysis of the written short essays on the conflict stories was conducted by the first author. First it was inductively coded in which setting the conflicts took place, extracting six categories: 1. Relationship (e.g., "conflict with my boyfriend"), 2. work (e.g., "dispute with my boss"), 3. family (e.g., "problems with my mother"), 4. friends (e.g., "my best friend lied to me"), 5. strangers (e.g., "conflict with stranger due to a car accident on the highway"), and 6. neighbours/acquaintances (e.g., "I had a dispute over cleaning the flat with my roommates"). Then the data was deductively rated again, scanning the statements for utterances and words according to which the conflict was assigned to one of the six categories. Of the 482 reported scenarios<sup>2</sup> 156 (35,53%) were categorized as conflicts in relationships, another 75 (17,08%) were about conflicts in the workplace context and 68 (15,49%) about conflicts within families. Further 58 (13,21%) conflicts involved good friends, 44 (10,02%) strangers and 32 (7,29%) neighbors or acquaintances. Three conflicts took place in the context of close relationships and involved good friends (0,68%). One conflict each took place at work but also involved good friends (0,23%) or strangers (0,23%), another conflict involved good friends as well as neighbors

or acquaintances (0,23%). The reported experiences ranged from small disputes among friends to severe conflicts including muggings and violence (e.g., "I and my kids were attacked and robbed in our own house. My kids were threatened with a knife to their throat and I was tied up and gagged."). However, physical violence was involved in only 49 (11,16%) of the reported conflicts.

**Analyses for Testing H1 and H2.** First, the number of items on need violation was reduced. All items that were of no importance in the conflict situations, i.e., all items with a mean of below 1.50, were dropped from further analyses (note: the rating category 1 meant "does not apply at all"). By using this criterion, 16 items were dropped; the remaining 93 items were included in the following analyses.

In order to cross-validate the results of the factor analyses, sub-sampling was applied. For the first two sub-samples a random split was used ( $n_{\text{Group1}} = 239$  and  $n_{\text{Group2}} = 239$  participants). We used the median-split of the rating for the transgression severity in order to produce two further sub-samples. This resulted in a group of participants that reported on a less severe ( $n_{\text{GroupA}} = 257$ ; transgression severity  $\leq 4.5$ ) and a group that reported on a more severe transgression ( $n_{\text{GroupB}} = 221$ ).

The answers of the first random-group (Group 1) were analyzed by means of explorative principal-axis factoring using oblique rotation (PROMAX) since the different need categories were expected to be correlated (cf. Max-Neef, 1991, p. 17). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was .88 and all KMO values for

<sup>2</sup> 39 (8,88%) of the conflicts could not be qualitatively rated due to a lack of information.

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individual items were above .64 (exceeding the suggested minimum of .5, cf. Field, 2009, p. 647). Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated that the correlations among items were sufficiently large ( $\chi^2(4278) = 14221.85, p < .001$ ). Multicollinearity was also not observed (no correlations above .8 among items). A parallel analysis was conducted according to Horn (1965) which revealed that the eigenvalues proposed an extraction of six factors. Overall the six factors accounted for 46.02% of the variance. We revealed a factor referred to as "need for leisure" (sum of squared loading: 15.80), a factor "need for acceptance" (11.48), a factor "need for meaning" (13.87), a factor "need for achievement" (11.47), a factor "need for safety" (6.90) and a factor "need for respect" (5.90). Stevens (2002) suggests that each item has to load on its own factor with at least .40 and on any other factor with less than .40 in order to establish an appropriate cut-off for the selection of items per factor. Of the 93 items included in the factor analysis, 23 items fulfilled these criteria and were grouped for theoretically sound reasons. The six factors with the selected 23 items accounted for 67.73% of the variance. The results of the factor analysis along with the final item selection are depicted in Table 1a and 1b.

In order to see if results replicated across different samples (H1) and conflicts of varying severity of transgressions (H2) the initial factor analysis was followed by confirmatory factor analyses for the second random group (Group 2) and for the low severity (Group A) as well as the high severity group (Group B). The confirmatory factor

analyses were computed with MPlus 6 (Muthen & Muthen, 2010). The model fit was evaluated using the CFI (comparative fit index; Bentler, 1990), the RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation; Steiger, 2000) and the SRMR (standardized root mean squared residual; Hu & Bentler, 1999). How well a model fits the data can be estimated applying the following standards: a RMSEA < .08, a SRMR < .10, a  $\chi^2/df$  ratio between 2 and 3, and a CFI > .95 (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Müller, 2003). Since the main interest of the analyses was to determine to which extent the factor structure found in the explorative analysis for Group 1 corresponds with the data of the other groups, the focus of the evaluation of the model fit was laid on the RMSEA and the SRMR (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003).

The six-factor-structure with the 23 items for Group 2 showed an acceptable fit (RMSEA = .07; SRMR = .07;  $\chi^2$ -to- $df$ -ratio ( $df, p$ ) = 2.10 (215, <.001); CFI = 0.90). For Group A the data also showed an acceptable fit (RMSEA = .07; SRMR = .06;  $\chi^2$ -to- $df$ -ratio ( $df, p$ ) = 2.12 (215, <.001); CFI = 0.89). Likewise an acceptable fit was given for Group B (RMSEA = .07; SRMR = .06;  $\chi^2$ -to- $df$ -ratio ( $df, p$ ) = 2.28 (215, .01); CFI = 0.90). Consequently, configural invariance was accepted. We additionally tested for metric invariance in accordance with the procedure introduced by Byrne (2010). For the multiple group comparison of Group 1 and 2 ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 36.63, df = 40, p = .62$ ) as well as Group A and B ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 43.02, df = 40, p = .34$ ) metric invariance was maintained. Thus, the results do not only show that the factor structure applies to the

different groups but also that the factor loadings for the different groups are equivalent. Hence, H1 and H2 were supported by the data.

**Analyses for Testing H3.** It was suggested with H3 that the relationship between the severity of transgression and the desire for revenge is mediated by the intensity of need violation on behalf of the victimized. The analysis of H3 relies on the precondition that the means in Group A (less severe) and Group B (more severe) are comparable. Hence, we tested for scalar invariance between these two groups, which is a precondition to compare latent means (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). Only partial scalar invariance can be proven: According to the step-wise analysis of scalar invariance as suggested by Byrne, Shavelson, and Muthén (1989), the intercepts of the need for leisure ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 10.13$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .04$ ) and the need for safety ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 22.22$ ,  $df = 10$ ,  $p = .01$ ) were not invariant, whereas the intercepts for the other needs were ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 16.62$ ,  $df = 11$ ,  $p = .12$ ). Accordingly, H3 can clearly be analyzed for the need for acceptance, the need for meaning, the need for achievement and the need for respect, whereas analyses including the needs for leisure and safety have to be interpreted more carefully.

The analyses of the mediation hypothesis H3 were calculated with the *MEDIATE* tool by Hayes and Preacher (2012). The bivariate correlations of the concepts were suitable for mediation analyses (cf. Table 2). In addition we revealed significant effects of the severity of the experienced conflict (low vs. high) on the mean ratings of the need

violations (leisure:  $F(1,476) = 34.60$ ; acceptance:  $F(1, 476) = 25.95$ ; meaning:  $F(1, 476) = 61.42$ ; achievement:  $F(1, 476) = 96.15$ ; safety:  $F(1, 476) = 32.07$ ; respect:  $F(1, 476) = 8.09$ ; all  $p$ 's < .01). Thus, it applied that the mean rating for each violated need category was higher in the case of less severe than in the case of high severe conflicts. The means are displayed in Table 3.

First of all, a mediation analysis showed that the severity of the transgression affected the need for respect ( $B = .20$ ,  $p < .01$ ), with the latter affecting the desire for revenge ( $B = .29$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The indirect effect of the severity of the transgression on the desire for revenge ( $B = .06$ ) supports considering the need for respect as a mediator, because the 95% CI did not include 0 (.03, .09). The same applies to all other need categories. The severity of the transgression impacted on the need for meaning ( $B = .50$ ,  $p < .01$ ), which affected the desire for revenge ( $B = .08$ ,  $p = .03$ ). The indirect effect ( $B = .04$ ) was significant (95% CI [.01, .08]). The severity of the transgression also affected the need for acceptance ( $B = .26$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and the need for achievement ( $B = .44$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Both need categories impacted on the desire for revenge (acceptance:  $B = .10$ ,  $p < .01$ ; achievement:  $B = .09$ ,  $p = .02$ ). Each of the indirect effects suggested that these need categories can be interpreted as mediators (acceptance:  $B = .03$ , 95% CI [.01, .05]; achievement:  $B = .04$ , 95% CI [.01, .08]). The indirect effects concerning the needs for leisure and safety also supported the mediating function of these needs (leisure:  $B = .03$ , 95% CI [.01, .05]; safety:  $B = .09$ , 95% CI [.06, .13]). Yet, the scalar invariance test

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called for cautious interpretation of the findings for the latter two needs. When calculating the mediation analysis with the mediation PROCESS tool (Hayes, in press) that allows to assess multiple mediators at the same time, the need for respect is the only need of those prone to mediation analysis for which the indirect effect ( $B = .08$ ) is significant (95% CI [.03, .15]). Thus, for the present data set the need for respect can be identified as the strongest mediator for the relationship between the severity of the conflict and the desire for revenge.

### Discussion

The analysis of the data suggests that six need categories can be identified that can be violated following the experience of an interpersonal conflict from the perspective of the person that felt inferior or viewed her-/himself as a victim. An explorative factor analysis revealed one need category with four items that can be labeled *need for respect*. A second factor that was labeled *need of meaning* encompasses three items. A further factor includes four items and can be interpreted as a *need for acceptance*. Another factor can be described as *need of leisure* and includes five items. Moreover, four items are labeled *need for achievement*. Last but not least there is a factor with three items that we have called *need for safety*. Confirmatory factor analyses showed that these needs replicated not only across two random sub-samples but also two samples that either included people that had experienced conflicts of higher or lower severity. The applied cross validation

procedure for the random groups as well as groups that had experienced conflicts of different severity supports the robustness of the instrument.

Interestingly, the categorization of the six needs revealed in the empirical analysis is similar to the system that Staub (2003) has focused on in his theoretical work on the interconnection of need violation and conflict. Staub (2003) emphasizes a need for safety, a need for comprehension of reality (cf. need for meaning<sup>3</sup>) and a need for positive connection to others (cf. need for acceptance). Staub's (2003) framing of the needs for a positive identity and effectiveness can, taken together, be interpreted as what we call the achievement need. The items of the achievement need address both effectiveness and a positive identity (cf. Table 1a). The identified need for leisure resembles the need for autonomy, which was also introduced by Staub (2003). In addition, our data suggested a need for

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<sup>3</sup> Janoff-Bulman (1992) elaborates that for victimized people "motivated cognitive strategies" (p. 117) can be observed "that facilitate the coping process by better enabling victims to reformulate a view of reality that can account for the victimization" (p. 117). One of these cognitive strategies is described by Janoff-Bulman (1992) as 'meaning making' (p. 118), which refers to a re-evaluation of the experienced transgression in terms of possible benefits and purposes (pp. 132-139). Janoff-Bulman (1992) is not explicitly referring to a need for meaning, however he describes the cognitive strategies as a part of a motivational process. Thus, his work can be considered as further theoretical support for the extracted "need for meaning".

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respect, which Staub (2003) did not explicitly name.<sup>4</sup> Regarding Staub's (2003) theoretical categorization our results offer first empirical findings.

Our study also supports the hypothesis that the relationship between the severity of transgression and the desire for revenge is mediated by each of the need categories extracted in the study. The mediation analyses of the categories need for leisure and safety have to be interpreted with caution, because no scalar invariance was found for these two categories when comparing the two groups that had either experienced a high or a low severe transgression. However, the results of the mediation analysis of the other four need categories suggest that the violation of these needs on part of the victimized can – at least to some extent – explain the relationship between the experienced severity of transgression and the desire for revenge. This shows that having information on the violated needs can be relevant for conflict resolution. The latter is in line with the literature that suggests that the fulfillment of basic needs can contribute to positive relations and reconciliation (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Staub, 2003).

Nevertheless, the results of the study have to be critically discussed. First of all, some concern about the construct validity of the study can be voiced. Since the participants answered the items in regard to an interpersonal conflict which

happened some time in the past, the answers to the items are possibly confounded with later experiences, for example with the person(s) involved in the conflict or with the participants' own coping strategies. However, the participants were asked to reply to the items as if the conflict had just taken place. Another methodological shortcoming that concerns the explorative factor analyses should also be mentioned. It is critical which items are included in the original questionnaire, because they of course influence the results of the factor analyses (cf. Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999). Even though we did include items from common need categories, it could be the case that the results would have been different if other need items had been included in the original questionnaire. Last but not least the issue of fatigue effects has to be mentioned as a potential shortcoming of the study's design. The questionnaire was quite long with its 109 items on violated needs. Thus, we cannot rule out whether all items of the questionnaire have been answered in the same thorough manner.

Additionally, the chosen sample and the question if the results can be generalized have to be critically discussed. As it is often the case, the participating sample was not a representative one, especially because it consisted mostly of higher educated persons. It is also questionable if the results apply also to people which are officially declared "victims of crime", because we did not evaluate if the reported situation can actually be defined as a crime. The participants only had to report on an interpersonal conflict in

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<sup>4</sup> Yet, Janoff-Bullman and Werther (2008), even though not directly referring to a "need of respect", state that individuals and groups are longing for respect and suggest that this may be an important key to reconciliation.

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which they felt inferior or being the victim. Yet, we have revealed that the categorization of the six needs applies not only to conflicts of lower but also to those of higher severity. In line with the elaboration on the term “victim”, it is important to note that the perpetrator-victim-dichotomy suggested in the paper at hand of course is often an oversimplification of describing a conflict history. Regarding the question of the generalization of the results it also has to be reminded that the sample was constricted to the German culture. Thus, it can be questioned if the extracted need categories apply to other cultures. However, it is important to differentiate between satisfiers of needs (i.e., shelter for a need of subsistence), which may indeed differ across cultures and basic needs, which might very likely be consistent across cultures (Max-Neef et al., 1991, pp. 16-18). Schwartz et al. (1992) offer empirical support that groups of needs indeed reoccur across cultures. Of course this does not mean that the importance of needs is also invariant across cultures (e.g., Guan et al., 2009; Schwartz, 1992). We recommend that the extent to which the extracted six need categories can be generalized to different cultures and contexts has to be addressed by further empirical research.

Concluding, we suggest that the six identified need categories can play a crucial role for restoring relationships after conflict. Nevertheless, we want to encourage further research that tests the role of the six needs and the developed assessment scale (cf. Table 1a) for conflict resolution. Further empirical research that confirms or challenges our findings is

very important, because many need categorizations already exist based on theoretical suggestions without having further been validated empirically (cf. Obrecht, 2005).

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## Tables

TABLE 1a

*Results of Explorative Factor Analysis (Factor Loadings, Means, Standard Deviations) on Final Need Items in Group 1*

Items (starting with "The incident kept me from..." or "Because of the incident I had/have the feeling...")	Factor loading	Mean (SD)
NEED FOR LEISURE ( $\alpha = .90$ )		
1. ...having fun.	.903	2.79 (1.58)
2. ...recovering.	.874	2.85 (1.61)
3. ...feeling free.	.822	2.90 (1.52)
4. ...enjoying my life.	.803	2.55 (1.56)
5. ...spending my time with pleasure.	.600	2.44 (1.53)
NEED FOR ACCEPTANCE ( $\alpha = .81$ )		
6. ...that the person(s) do(es) not take me as I am.	.863	3.17 (1.56)
7. ...that the person(s) has/have a bad opinion of me.	.698	3.20 (1.48)
8. ...that the person(s) do(es) not accept me.	.667	3.39 (1.40)
9. ...that the person(s) do(es) not appreciate me for what I do.	.649	3.03 (1.60)
NEED FOR RESPECT ( $\alpha = .81$ )		
10. ...that the person(s) do(es) not adhere to the common rules.	.824	3.55 (1.49)
11. ...that the person(s) do(es) not adhere to the norms.	.786	3.54 (1.43)
12. ...that the person(s) do(es) not pay regard to me.	.644	3.86 (1.34)
13. ...that the person(s) do(es) not have respect of me.	.509	3.43 (1.44)
NEED FOR SAFETY ( $\alpha = .81$ )		
14. ...that I am still being threatened.	.902	1.53 (1.10)
15. ...that there is still danger stemming from the person(s).	.747	2.21 (1.48)
16. ...that my safety is threatened.	.698	1.74 (1.29)
NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT ( $\alpha = .73$ )		
17. ...that I was not able to prove my abilities.	.720	2.00 (1.39)
18. ...that I am useless.	.626	1.91 (1.33)
19. ...that my achievements are not sufficient.	.603	2.56 (1.49)
20. ...that I do not have a say.	.523	2.72 (1.51)
NEED FOR MEANING ( $\alpha = .70$ )		
21. ...that I don't really understand what happened.	.718	2.89 (1.50)
22. ...that I have to rack my brains over why these things happened.	.625	3.74 (1.36)
23. ...that for me questions remain unanswered about what happened.	.589	3.53 (1.47)

*Note.* Labels and Cronbach's alpha for the identified need factors are given above each group of items. The original German items can be requested from the first author of this paper.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For the outline of the dissertation project the German original items are presented in Appendix B (p.119).

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TABLE 1b

*Intercorrelations of Need Factors for Group 1*

	acceptance	respect	safety	achievement	meaning
leisure	.23	.04	.13	.26	.40
acceptance		.42	.21	.48	.41
respect			.34	.33	.21
safety				.13	.14
achievement					.32

TABLE 2

*Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Variables Included in the Tested Mediation Model*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Subjective Severity	-	.18**	.19**	.45**	.23**	.25**	.44**	.25**
2. Desire for revenge		-	.40**	.17**	.17**	.16**	.17**	.46**
3. Need for respect			-	.25**	.43**	.15**	.30**	.38**
4. Need for meaning				-	.33**	.35**	.42**	.17**
5. Need for acceptance					-	.29**	.53**	.24**
6. Need for leisure						-	.37**	.16**
7. Need for achievement							-	.19**
8. Need for safety								-
<i>M</i>	4.55	2.02	3.58	3.34	3.20	2.70	2.34	1.87
<i>SD</i>	1.06	.86	1.14	1.18	1.20	1.33	1.08	1.10

\*\*  $p \leq .01$ ,  $N = 478$ 

TABLE 3

## Means and Standard Deviations for the six Needs in the Low and the High Severity Condition

Need	Low severity Mean ( <i>SD</i> )	High severity Mean ( <i>SD</i> )
Leisure	2.38 (1.25)	3.07 (1.32)
Acceptance	2.95 (1.13)	3.49 (1.21)
Meaning	2.97 (1.14)	3.77 (1.07)
Achievement	1.93 ( .87)	2.82 (1.10)
Safety	1.62 ( .92)	2.17 (1.21)
Respect	3.44 (1.12)	3.74 (1.14)

 $N = 478$

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## APPENDIX A

*A Priori Categorization of the 109 Need Items Applying Verbal Descriptors of the Items*

<b>Self-worth (9 items)</b>
... that my self-esteem is crushed. ( <i>self-worth/self-esteem</i> : e.g. Frijda et al., 1994; Lazare, 2004, p. 45;)
... that my reputation has been damaged. ( <i>self-worth/self-esteem</i> : e.g., Frijda et al., 1994; Lazare, 2004, p. 45; <i>achievement</i> : Schwartz, 2001, PVQ)
... that the reputation of the group, to which I feel connected to, has been harmed. ( <i>social identity</i> : Tedeschi & Nesler, 1993, pp. 15-16)
... that the person(s) has/have a bad opinion of me. ( <i>self-worth</i> : Maslow, 1970, pp.15-23, in accordance with Arzberger et al. 1979, pp. 18,28; <i>social recognition</i> : Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83 in accordance with (i.a.w. in the following) the D-PRF by Stumpf et al., 1985)
... that the person(s) isn't /aren't able to recognize what I am able to. ( <i>self-worth</i> : Maslow, 1970, i.a.w. Arzberger et al., 1979, pp. 18,28)
... that I am less unique. ( <i>contrariance</i> : Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83; <i>distinctiveness</i> : Obrecht, 2005)
... that my dignity has been violated. ( <i>dignity</i> : e.g., Lazare, 2004, p. 45; Ren & Grey, 2009; Robbennolt, 2008, p. 205)
... that I cannot keep going as long as others. ( <i>self-worth</i> : e.g., Frijda et al., 1994)
... that I am useless. ( <i>self-worth</i> : e.g., Frijda et al., 1994)
<b>Dominance (10 items)</b>
... that the person(s) do(es) not have respect of me. ( <i>power</i> : Lazare, 2004, pp. 45-46; <i>power</i> : Schwartz, 2003, PVQ-21)
... that the situation is out of my reach. ( <i>power</i> : e.g., Lazare, 2004, pp. 45-46)
... that I do not have a say. ( <i>empowerment</i> : Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; <i>dominance</i> : Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83, i.a.w. the D-PRF by Stumpf et al., 1985)
... that I do not have sufficient control over others. ( <i>empowerment</i> : Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; <i>security</i> : Schwartz, 2001, PVQ)
... that I do not have power. ( <i>empowerment</i> : Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; <i>social recognition</i> : Obrecht, 2005)
... that I do not have an influence on the person(s). ( <i>empowerment</i> : Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; <i>social recognition</i> : Obrecht, 2005; <i>dominance</i> : Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83, i.a.w. D-PRF by Stumpf et al., 1985)
... that an imbalance of advantages and disadvantages has occurred between me and the other(s). ( <i>re-equilibration of power</i> : Frijda, 1994, pp. 281-282; <i>need for justice</i> : Obrecht, 2005)
... to be defeated. ( <i>counteraction</i> : Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83)
... that I have suffered myself, but not the person(s) who has/have harmed me. ( <i>re-equilibration of gains and losses</i> : Frijda, 1994, pp. 281-282; <i>need for justice</i> : Obrecht, 2005)
...that not all humans are treated equally. ( <i>universalism</i> : Schwartz, 2003, PVQ-21)
<b>Acceptance (8 items)</b>
...that I am not taken seriously as a human being. ( <i>treated with sincerity</i> : e.g., Robbennolt, 2008, p. 206; <i>succorance</i> : Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83, i.a.w. D-PRF by Stumpf et al., 1985)
...that the person(s) do(es) not pay regard to me. ( <i>treated with sincerity</i> : e.g., Robbennolt, 2008, p. 206)
...that the person(s) do(es) not accept me. ( <i>acceptance</i> : Ren & Grey, 2009)
...that the person(s) do(es) not take me as I am. ( <i>acceptance</i> : Ren & Grey, 2009)
...that the person(s) do(es) not treat me equitably. ( <i>acceptance</i> : Ren & Grey, 2009)
...that the person(s) challenge(s) my culture. ( <i>identity</i> : Max-Neef et al., 1991, p. 33)
...that the person(s) question(s) my values. ( <i>identity</i> : Max-Neef et al., 1991, p. 33)
...that the person(s) assault(s) my identity. ( <i>identity</i> : Max-Neef et al., 1991, p. 33; <i>social identity</i> : Tedeschi & Nesler, 1993, pp. 15-16)
<b>Blamelessness (5 items)</b>
...that I behaved wrongly in the situation. ( <i>no self-blame</i> : e.g., Lazare, 2004, pp. 58-59; Smith, 2008, p. 36)
...that I am humiliated. ( <i>infavoidance/blaimavoidance</i> : Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83)
...that I am ashamed. ( <i>no self-blame</i> : e.g., Lazare, 2004, pp. 58-59; Smith, 2008, p. 36)
...that I have to defend my innocence. ( <i>defendance/blaimavoidance</i> : Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83)
...that I must feel guilty. ( <i>no self-blame</i> : e.g., Lazare, 2004, pp. 58-59; Smith, 2008, p. 36)
<b>Affection (4 items)</b>
...that the person(s) reject(s) me. ( <i>affection</i> : Max-Neef et al., 1991, p. 32; <i>affection</i> : Ren & Grey, 2009)
...that the person(s) do(es) not seem to care what happens to me. ( <i>affection</i> : Max-Neef et al., 1991, p. 32; <i>affection</i> : Ren & Grey, 2009)
...that the person(s) do(es) not support me. ( <i>affection</i> : Max-Neef et al., 1991, p. 32; <i>affection</i> : Ren & Grey, 2009)
...that the person(s) do(es) not like me. ( <i>affection</i> : Maslow, 1970, i.a.w. Arzberger et al., 1979, pp. 18,28)

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**Social Belonging (3 items)**

...that my membership in our collective is questioned. (*group membership*: Ren & Grey, 2009; *membership*: Obrecht, 2005; *affiliation*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83, i.a.w. D-PRF by Stumpf et al., 1985)

...that nobody is there to help me in case of distress. (*protection*: Max-Neef et al., 1991, p.32; *succorance*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83, i.a.w. D-PRF by Stumpf et al., 1985)

...that I am alone. (*need of love*: Obrecht, 2005; *affiliation*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83, i.a.w. D-PRF by Stumpf et al., 1985)

**Achievement (5 items)**

...that the person(s) do(es) not appreciate me for what I do.

...that I am not good enough.

...that my achievements are not sufficient.

...that I was not able to prove my abilities.

...that I am not determined enough.

All items base on: *achievement*: Schwartz, 2003, PQ-21; *social recognition*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83, i.a.w. D-PRF by Stumpf et al., 1985; *achievement*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83, i.a.w. D-PRF by Stumpf et al., 1985; *need for recognition*: Maslow, 1970, i.a.w. Arzberger et al., 1979, pp. 18,28

**Predictability (9 items)**

...that the person(s) do(es) not adhere to the common rules. (*conformity*: Schwartz, 2003, PVQ-21)

...that the person(s) do(es) not adhere to the norms. (*control*: Obrecht, 2005)

...that I cannot rely on anyone anymore. (*trust*: e.g., Strang et al., 2006)

...that I cannot trust the person(s) anymore. (*trust*: e.g., Strang et al., 2006)

...that I cannot further rely on the goodness in humans. (*benevolence*: Schwartz, 2001, PVQ)

...that I cannot predict the behavior of the person(s) is not predictable. (*predictability*: e.g., Lazare, 2004, p. 80; Smith, 2008, p. 80)

...that a lot of things happen that I cannot predict. (*predictability*: e.g., Lazare, 2004, p. 80; Smith, 2008, p. 80; *need for control*: Obrecht, 2005)

...that I don't really understand what happened. (*record*: e.g., Smith, 2008, p. 28-29; Lazare, 2004, p. 119; *need for information relevant for orientation and action*: Obrecht, 2005)

...that for me questions remain unanswered about what happened. (*record*: e.g., Smith, 2008, p. 28-29; Lazare, 2004, p. 119; *need for information relevant for orientation and action*: Obrecht, 2005)

**Safety (8 items)**

...that my safety is threatened. (*security*: Schwartz, 2003, PVQ-21; *protection*: Max-Neef et al., 1991, p. 32; *safety*: e.g., Lazare, 2004, p. 59, Ren & Grey, 2009)

...to have been threatened by death. (e.g., Lazare, 2004, p. 59, Ren & Grey, 2009)

...that there is still danger stemming from the person(s). (e.g., Lazare, 2004, p. 59, Ren & Grey, 2009)

...that I am not sufficiently protected against criminality. (*need for safety*: Maslow, 1970, i.a.w. Arzberger et al., 1979, pp. 18,28)

...that my financial hedging is endangered. (*security*: Maslow, 1970, i.a.w. Arzberger et al. 1979, pp. 18,28; *power*: Schwartz, 2003, PVQ-21; *acquisition*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83)

...that my belongings were damaged. (*material safety*: Tedeschi & Nesler, 1993, pp. 15-16)

...that my belongings are gone. (*material safety*: Tedeschi & Nesler, 1993, pp. 15-16)

...that I am still being threatened. (*protection of further threat*: Frijda, 1994)

**Benevolence (4 items)**

...helping others. (*social need*: Malsow, 1943, i.a.w. Porter, 1961; *benevolence*: Schwartz, 2003, PVQ-21; *need to help others*: Obrecht, 2005)

...standing up for people that are close to me. (*benevolence*: Schwartz, 2003, PVQ-21)

...putting myself in the position of others. (*similance*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83)

...supporting the cause of the powerless in society. (*universalism*: Schwartz, 2001, PVQ; *nurturance*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83, i.a.w. D-PRF Stumpf et al., 1985)

**Cognitive Stimulation (4 items)**

...experiencing something exciting. (*abatement/harmavoidance*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83, i.a.w. Stumpf et al., 1985, D-PRF; *stimulation*: Schwartz, 2003, PVQ-21)

...experiencing something new (*stimulation*: Schwartz, 2003, PVQ-21; *need for variety*: Obrecht, 2005)

...being spontaneous. (*leisure*: Max-Neef et al., 1991, p. 32)

...learning something new. *understanding/cognizance*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83, i.a.w. D-PRF by Stumpf et al., 1985; *understanding*: Max-Neef et al., 1991, p. 32)

**Autonomy (10 items)**

...deciding on things that concern me. (*need for self-fulfillment*: Arzberger, et al. 1979, pp. 18,28; *protection*: Max-Neef et al., 1991, p. 32)

...conducting my actions. (*autonomy*: Obrecht, 2005)

...exercising my rights. (*need to have rights*: Tedeschi & Nesler, 1993, pp. 15-16; *participation*: Max-Neef et al., 1991, p. 32)

...being independent of the person(s). (*self-direction*: Schwartz, 1992, PVQ, PVQ-21; *autonomy*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83; *autonomy*: Obrecht, 2005)



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- ...**deploying and developing my abilities.** (*actualization*: Arzberger et al., 1979, pp. 18,28; *competence*: Obrecht, 2005)  
 ...**being creative and having original ideas.** (*self-direction*: Schwartz, 2003, PVQ, PVQ-21; *creation*: Max-Neef et al., 1991, p.32)  
 ...**relying on myself.** (*self-direction*: Schwartz, 2001, PVQ, 2003, PVQ-21)  
 ...**pursuing my dreams and hopes.** (*subjective meaning*: Obrecht, 2005)  
 ...**performing my life successfully.** (*self-esteem (self-efficacy)*: Frijda, 1994)  
 ...**feeling free.** (*freedom*: Max-Neef et al., 1991, p. 33)
- 

**Health (7 items)**

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- ...**that my well-being is deteriorated.** (*psychological healing*: e.g., Strang et al., 2006; *subsistence*: Max-Neef et al., 1991, p. 32; *physical integrity*: Obrecht, 2005)  
 ...**that I have to rack my brains over why these things happened.** (*psychological healing*: e.g., Strang et al., 2006)  
 ...**that my health is deteriorated.** (*health*: Arzberger et al., 1979, pp. 18,28; *subsistence*: Max-Neef et al., 1991, p. 32)  
 ...**that as a result I have physical problems.** (*physical integrity*: Obrecht, 2005; *absence physical injury*: Tedeschi & Nesler, 1993, pp. 15-16)  
 ...**that my body was injured.** (*absence of physical injury*: Tedeschi & Nesler, 1993, pp. 40-43)  
 ...**to have to carry around many negative emotions.** (*affect regulation*: Frijda, 1994, pp. 281-282)  
 ...**that my feelings have been hurt.** (*affect regulation*: Frijda, 1994, pp. 281-282)
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**Tradition/Conformity (10 items)**

- 
- ...**appreciating other opinions.** (*universalism*: Schwartz, 2003, PVQ-21)  
 ...**being modest and humble.** (*tradition*: Schwartz, 2001, PVQ, 2003, PVQ-21)  
 ...**adhering to customs and traditions.** (*tradition*: Schwartz, 1992, PVQ, PVQ-21)  
 ...**being satisfied with what I have.** (*tradition*: Schwartz, 2001, PVQ, 2003, PVQ-21; *retention*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83)  
 ...**behaving correctly.** (*conformity*: Schwartz, 2003, PVQ-21; *blaimavoidance*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83)  
 ...**being involved in my social surroundings.** (*participation*: Max-Neef et al., 1991. p.32)  
 ...**respecting authorities.** (*deference*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83)  
 ...**sparing materials.** (*conservance*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83)  
 ...**rejecting other people.** (*rejection*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83)  
 ...**giving other people helpful answers to their questions.** (*exposition*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83)
- 

**Recovery/Sexuality (6 items)**

- 
- ...**acting out my sexual desires.** (*sexual activity*: Obrecht, 2005; *physical needs*: Maslow, 1970, pp. 15-23)  
 ...**being able to eat and/or drink enough.** (*physical needs*: Maslow, 1970, pp. 15-23; *necessary substitute material*: Obrecht, 2005)  
 ...**recovering.** (*regeneration*: Obrecht, 2005; *physical needs*: Maslow, 1970, pp. 15-23)  
 ...**relaxing.** (*regeneration*: Obrecht, 2005; *physical needs*: Maslow, 1970, pp. 15-23)  
 ...**fully apprehending my environment.** (*sensory needs*: Obrecht, 2005)  
 ...**regarding something with enjoyment.** (*need for aesthetic experience*: Obrecht, 2005)
- 

**Leisure (4 items)**

- 
- ...**enjoying my life.** (*hedonism*: Schwartz, 2003, PVQ-21)  
 ...**having fun.** (*hedonism*: Schwartz, 2003, PVQ-21; *play*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83, i.a.w. D-PRF by Stumpf et al., 1985)  
 ...**taking center stage.** (*exhibition*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83, i.a.w. D-PRF by Stumpf et al., 1985)  
 ...**spending my time with pleasure.** (*leisure*: Max-Neef et al., 1991, p. 32)
- 

**Order (3 items)**

- 
- ...**being tidy.** (*order*: Murray, 1938, pp. 80-83, i.a.w. D-PRF by Stumpf et al., 1985)  
 ...**organizing my everyday life.** (*construction*: Murray, 1935, pp. 80-83)  
 ...**making anticipatory plans.** (*construction*: Murray, 1935, pp. 80-83)
- 

*Note.* The original items are phrased in German and translated for this article. This applies for all following item reports. The items either start with “Because of the incident I had/have the feeling...” or “The incident kept me from...”.

## THE NEEDS OF VICTIMS

## APPENDIX B

*Original Version of the Translated Items Displayed in Table 1a.*

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Items
(beginnend mit "Der Vorfall hat mich daran gehindert,..." oder "Der Vorfall hat dazu geführt, dass ich das Gefühl hatte,...")
<b>BEDÜRFNIS NACH MUßE</b>
1. ...Spaß zu haben.
2. ...mich zu erholen.
3. ...mich frei zu fühlen.
4. ...mein Leben zu genießen.
5. ...mit Freude meine Zeit zu verbringen.
<b>BEDÜRFNIS NACH AKZEPTANZ</b>
6. ...dass die Person(en) mich nicht so annimmt/annehmen wie ich bin.
7. ...dass die Person(en) eine schlechte Meinung von mir hat/haben.
8. ...dass die Person(en) mich nicht akzeptiert/akzeptieren.
9. ...dass die Person(en) mich für das, was ich mache, nicht schätzt/schätzen.
<b>BEDÜRFNIS NACH RESPEKT</b>
10. ...dass die Person(en) sich nicht an die gemeinsamen Regeln hält/halten.
11. ...dass die Person(en) sich nicht an die Normen hält/halten.
12. ...dass die Person(en) keine Rücksicht auf mich nimmt/nehmen.
13. ...dass die Person(en) keinen Respekt vor mir hat/haben.
<b>BEDÜRFNIS NACH SICHERHEIT</b>
14. ...weiterhin bedroht zu sein.
15. ...dass von den Person(en) weiterhin Gefahr ausgeht.
16. ...dass meine Sicherheit bedroht ist.
<b>BEDÜRFNIS NACH LEISTUNG</b>
17. ...meine Fähigkeiten einzusetzen.
18. ...dass ich nutzlos bin.
19. ...dass meine Leistungen nicht ausreichend sind.
20. ...dass ich nichts zu sagen habe.
<b>BEDÜRFNIS ZU VERSTEHEN</b>
21. ...nicht wirklich zu verstehen, was passiert ist.
22. ...meinen Kopf darüber zerbrechen zu müssen, warum diese Dinge passiert sind.
23. ...offene Fragen zu haben zu dem, was passiert ist.

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## **DISCUSSION**

## **5. Discussion**

In this section I report and critically discuss results from the studies of the three Manuscripts that have been displayed in section 2, 3, and 4. The results regard the questions which content of apologies is effective (5.1 – 5.1.3) and why the content of apologies is differently effective (5.2 – 5.2.3). In section 5.3 common shortcomings of the conducted studies are elaborated, before a final conclusion of the dissertation project is drawn in section 5.4. The latter section ends with suggestions for future directions in the area of research on apologies.

### **5.1 Which Content of Apologies is Effective: The Impact of Content of Apologies Depending on Transgression Severity**

One of the main goals of our studies was to scrutinize which content of interpersonal or intergroup apologies is effective from the perspective of the transgressed. To find answers to these questions we researched on the effects of varying the components of apologies suggested by Blatz, Schumann, and Ross (2009) as well as by Kirchhoff, Strack, and Jäger (2009). We scrutinized the effects of different combinations of the components on forgiveness in Manuscript 1 on interpersonal apologies. In Manuscript 2 on intergroup apologies both the acceptance of the apology and intergroup forgiveness were evaluated. We also tested how the severity of transgression impacts on the effects of varying the content of apologies. In the following the main results of the studies are reported for interpersonal (5.1.1) and intergroup (5.1.2) apologies separately. Afterwards overarching results on the question which content of apologies is effective are depicted (5.1.3).

#### **5.1.1 Effective Content in Interpersonal Apologies**

Study 1 of Manuscript 1 on interpersonal apologies illuminated that after a neighborhood conflict apologies including more of the components suggested by Kirchhoff et al. (2009) were more successful in increasing forgiveness by the transgressed than apologies including less of these components. There was also some support that the finding applied slightly more to a transgression

of higher severity than to one of lower severity. The empirical findings are in line with theoretical assumptions by, for example, Benoit (1995). Furthermore, it was revealed in Study 1 that some components suggested by Kirchhoff et al. (2009) were rated as more important than others. We used this importance ranking for the operationalization of the interpersonal apologies in Study 2 of Manuscript 1. We did so by including the components in the scrutinized apologies in order of their importance, beginning with the more important ones. As a consequence the results of Study 2 revealed the following: After an interpersonal transgression in a neighborhood conflict an apology that included the most important component induced less forgiveness than an apology that included the four most important components. For the given context, the four most important components were conveying emotions, admitting fault, a statement of apology (IFID) such as “I apologize”, and an attempt at explanation. The addition of more than these four components, however, did not have an effect on the likelihood of forgiveness by the transgressed.

### **5.1.2 Effective Content in Intergroup Apologies**

From the studies in Manuscript 1 on interpersonal apologies we had learned that the relative importance of the apologies' components suggested in the theoretical model by Kirchhoff et al. (2009) can vary. We concluded that this might also be the case for intergroup apologies. Accordingly, we conducted pretests on the relevance of the components for each of the two studies in Manuscript 2. However, we pretested not only the relevance of the apologies' components from the model by Kirchhoff et al. (2009). We also pretested the relevance of components by Blatz et al. (2009), because of the specific intergroup focus of their model. Study 1 in Manuscript 2 supported that the variation in the content of an intergroup apology affected the acceptance of the speech act but not intergroup forgiveness. Nevertheless, the latter is not surprising due to the fact that there are some issues stemming from the concept of intergroup forgiveness. This is for example that the recipients often have to forgive on behalf of others (cf. Brown, Wohl, & Exline, 2008). Some, even though not substantial, support was found in Study 1 regarding the hypothesis that content in the

intergroup apology matters in particular in the aftermath of more severe transgressions. Study 2 of Manuscript 2 analyzed the content of intergroup apologies in the aftermath of extremely severe transgressions during war time in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The study also revealed that the components of an intergroup apology induced significant changes in the acceptance of the apology but not in intergroup forgiveness. For Study 2 the manipulation of the severity of transgression was not successful.

The combinations of components that resulted in a significant increase in the acceptance of the intergroup apology differed across Study 1 and 2. In Study 1 an intergroup apology including the five components naming the transgression, a statement of apology (IFID) such as “we apologize”, taking responsibility, promising forbearance, and conveying emotions was decisively accepted more than intergroup apologies including some (two or three) or all of the five components without the conveyance of emotions. This difference between the 5-component apology and less complete apologies seemed to particularly apply after a transgression of higher severity. In Study 2 a significant change in the acceptance of an intergroup apology was found, when comparing an apology that included the four components addressing suffering, naming the transgression, statement of apology (IFID), and admitting a norm violation to apologies including some (two) or all of the four components except for the addressing of suffering. In both studies the inclusion of more than the five (Study 1) or the four (Study 2) components, for which a significant change in the acceptance of the apology was observed, did not further increase the effectiveness of the intergroup apology. The fact that type and number of components responsible for a significant increase in the acceptance of the intergroup apology varied across contextual variables (type of transgression, culture) is in line with assumptions within the non-empirical literature on intergroup apologies (Coicaud & Jönsson, 2008; Griswold, 2007, p. 155).

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### 5.1.3 Effective Content in Apologies: Overarching Results and Critical Discussion

We aimed at finding answers to the questions which content of interpersonal or intergroup apologies is effective from the perspective of the transgressed. We extended previous research by systematically analyzing the effects of varying the components of apologies. In addition, we did not only research on apologies following less severe but also more severe transgressions. For the interpersonal as well as the intergroup apologies we found that the components of apologies did change the effectiveness of the apologies: In the interpersonal context we detected changes in forgiveness while we found an effect on the acceptance of the apology for the intergroup context. However, the combinations of components in the apologies that contributed to a significant change in the acceptance of the apology or forgiveness were context-dependent and varied across studies. There was some support that the change in the effectiveness of the apology induced by its content applied slightly more following transgressions of higher severity.

Some of the 14 components of apology from the models by Blatz et al. (2009) and Kirchhoff et al. (2009) did not have a relevant effect on increasing effectiveness of the apologies in either of the conducted studies. The latter has to be interpreted cautiously, because the added components were always included in a set of components and we did not incorporate no-apology conditions in our research designs. Accordingly, we cannot conclude irrevocably that the components that did not seem to increase the apology's effectiveness are not effective if analyzed separately, in comparison to a no-apology condition, or in other combinations. Similarly, it applies that when we added a component to a set of different components and found an increase in the depended variables it is not totally clear if it was the addition of the component or the particular combination of components that was effective. It was of course also not feasible to test all possible combinations of the 14 components of apology. Thus, we cannot infer whether some combinations that we did not test are more effective than others.

As reported above we have not scrutinized the same combinations of apologies across the four experimental studies we conducted. Instead we pretested the relevance of the components of apology from the models by Blatz et al. (2009) and Kirchhoff et al. (2009) for the given contexts. This way we were able to uncover whether further components still increased the effectiveness of the apology if the components being more relevant had already been included in the apology. Consequently, each study yielded results that show which components are really the most relevant ones for the given context. Yet, that we did not operationalize the same apologies across the four experimental studies is – at the same time – one of the major shortcomings of the dissertation project. The chosen procedure does not allow comparing the results on the components of the apologies across studies. Thus, it cannot be concluded for example that “across studies the elements X and Y always significantly contributed to a change in the effectiveness of the apology”. In line with this shortcoming I will make some suggestions for further research in section 5.4.

## **5.2 Why the Content of Apologies is Differently Effective: The Role of Anger Reduction and Need Fulfillment**

The second of the overarching goals of the dissertation project was to scrutinize why the content of interpersonal or intergroup apologies contributes to their effectiveness from the perspective of the transgressed. To find answers to this question we scrutinized the reduction of anger and the fulfillment of needs as possible mediator variables for the relationship between the content of apologies and forgiveness by the transgressed in Manuscript 1 on interpersonal apologies. In Manuscript 2 on interpersonal apologies the acceptance of the apology was evaluated as a second dependent variable. In the following the main results of the studies will be reported for interpersonal (5.2.1) and intergroup (5.2.2) apologies separately. Afterwards overarching results on the question why apologies are differently effective will be depicted (5.2.3).



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### 5.2.1 Why the Content of Interpersonal Apologies is Differently Effective

Study 1 of Manuscript 1 supported that at least after more severe transgressions anger reduction can – to some extent – explain the relationship between the components of an interpersonal apology and forgiveness after the more severe transgression. However, in Study 2 of Manuscript 1, the reduction of anger was not revealed as a mediator variable. One possible explanation may be that when the interpersonal apology already included the components that were rated as being most important, the other components did not add much to the reduction of anger of the transgressed.

We suggested the fulfillment of needs to be another set of mediator variables which could explain the relationship between the content of interpersonal apologies and their effectiveness. We did not find consistent models on need categories in the previous literature that could apply to transgressed people. It is lacking in particular in the empirical analysis of the suggested need categories which tests if the theoretically derived needs are actually distinguishable by means of empirical data (Obrecht, 2005). Therefore we conducted the study that was portrayed in Manuscript 3 which asked people to report on an interpersonal conflict they had experienced and in which they had felt inferior or viewed her-/himself as a victim. The results of the study revealed six need categories which can be violated following the experience of an interpersonal conflict. The need categories we discovered were: A need for respect, a need for meaning, a need for acceptance, a need for leisure, a need for achievement, and a need for safety. Interestingly, the revealed categorization of the six needs is similar to a system that Staub (2003) has focused on in his theoretical work on the interconnection of need violation and conflict. The relevance of the six need categories for conflict resolution was explored in our study by testing if these need categories mediated the relationship between the severity of the conflict that the participants had experienced and their drive for revenge. It was revealed that each need category indeed functioned as a mediator variable. However, the results for the need for leisure and the need for safety have to be interpreted

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cautiously. Reason for this is that no scalar invariance was found for the latter two needs when comparing the two groups that had experienced transgressions of either high or low severity.

### **5.2.2 Why the Content of Intergroup Apologies is Differently Effective**

For both studies of Manuscript 2 the reduction of intergroup anger could not be identified as a mediator variable for the relationship between the content of intergroup apologies and the acceptance of the apology or forgiveness by the transgressed. The same applied to the analyses of the perception of empowerment as a mediator variable for the relationship between the apologies' content and the measurements of effectiveness. Thus, in neither of the studies we found an explanation why components in intergroup apologies make a difference in terms of their effectiveness.

### **5.2.3 Why the Content of Apologies is Differently Effective: Overarching Results and Critical Discussion**

We aimed at extending previous research on interpersonal and intergroup apologies by asking why a variation in the content of apologies results in a change in the acceptance of the apology or forgiveness by the transgressed. The analyses of the first expected mediator variable, which was the reduction of anger, did not reveal satisfying answers to this question. For interpersonal apologies the reduction of anger only mediated the relationship between the content of apologies and forgiveness in one of the two studies. Similarly, in none of the studies on intergroup apologies the reduction of anger was identified as a mediator variable for the relationship between the content of apologies and their effectiveness.

Furthermore, the fulfillment of the need for empowerment (cf. Shnabel, Nadler, Canetti-Nisim, & Ullrich, 2008) did not mediate the relationship between the content of the intergroup apologies and their effectiveness. For the interpersonal context we so far did not scrutinize needs as mediator variables. Yet, we identified six needs categories in Manuscript 3 that can be analyzed in further research as mediator variables for the relationship between the content of apologies and

measurements of effects. Nevertheless, even though Schwartz (1992) offered empirical support for needs being considered as reoccurring across cultures, the extent to which the extracted six need categories can be generalized to different cultures and contexts, needs to be questioned.

Concluding, it has to be noted that we cannot infer that apologies in general do not affect the proposed mediator variables which are the reduction of anger or the fulfillment of needs. When contrasting apologies not to other apologies but to a condition in which after a transgression no apology is given at all, the suggested mediator variables might be able to explain the variance in reactions of the transgressed. In addition, further mediator variables of the relationship between the content of apologies and their acceptance should be considered. For the interpersonal context this could be for example the trust in the apologizing person. Stubbs (2007) suggests that the receiver of the apology needs to trust the apologizer in order to be able to judge an apologetic utterance. An example of another possible mediator variable in the intergroup context could be empathy for the perpetrating group. The latter concept has been shown to mediate the relationship between intergroup contact and forgiveness (Čehajić, Brown, & Castano, 2008).

### **5.3 Common Shortcomings of the Conducted Studies**

Before the final conclusion in section 5.4, some overarching shortcomings of the conducted studies have to be named. First of all, the format of the study designs in Manuscript 1 and 2 did not allow for the apologies to be dialogical. This means after receiving the apology there was no further interaction between those giving and those receiving the apology. For the interpersonal (e.g., Lazare, 2004, p. 66; Tavuchis, 1991, p. 46) as well as for the intergroup context (e.g., Barkan & Karn, 2006; Blatz & Philpot, 2010) it is supported that an apology can and should have a dyadic character with all parties of conflict being involved in the process of developing the apology. It seems logical that an interactive apology can have very positive effects since remaining concerns, especially on the part of the transgressed, can be directly addressed (Hatch, 2006). Even though we pretested the importance of the apology's components by Blatz et al. (2009) and Kirchhoff et al. (2009) for three

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of our samples, we researched on the effects of apologies without further interaction between the persons involved in the process of apologizing.

The online studies on apologies also did not allow for an actual estimation of mimic, facial or linguistic parameters such as tone and intonation of the expressions, which are particularly important for the evaluation of utterances and the conveyance of emotions (cf. Anderson, Linden, & Habra, 2006; Barkan & Karn, 2006; Dixon, Tredoux, Durrheim, & Foster, 1994; Wohl, Hornsey, & Philpot, 2011). Our research design did not include an operationalization of non-verbal components of apologies. Hence, we cannot conclude about their contribution to the perception of the apologies we operationalized.

Concerning the research on discovering the way how apologies function, another issue has to be stated. There is the risk that an apology is given without really accepting blame but rather with the goal to calm the offended and to avoid punishment (Coicaud & Jönsson, 2008; Exline, Deshea, & Holeman, 2003; Tavuchis, 1991, p. 7; Weiner, Graham, & Zmuidinas, 1991). Thus there might be a risk that some people misuse the research on the components of apologies. However, the receiver of an apology can accept it but is in no way required to forgive the person or group offering the apology (e.g., Allan, Allan, Kaminer, & Stein, 2006; Byrne, 2004). Nevertheless, the possible misuse calls for apologies to be set within a broad and comprehensive approach towards reconciliation including a post-apology engagement (Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Thompson, 2008; Wohl et al., 2011). It is important that apologies are recognized and implemented in their function of a moral instrument, which can be beneficial to the offenders, the offended, and society as a whole (e.g., Bibas & Bierschbach, 2004).

Further, it is necessary to refer critically to the perpetrator-victim-dichotomy suggested in the designs of all of the studies we conducted. In real life such a dichotomy can hardly ever be found, neither on the interpersonal nor on the intergroup level. Last but not least, none of the scrutinized samples was a representative one. Thus the generalization of the results of all the studies we

conducted is questionable. In particular, the generalization of the results on the content of apologies in Manuscript 1 and 2 has to be viewed critically. This is especially true because our studies suggest that context variables considerably influence which content impacts on the effectiveness of the apology.

#### **5.4 Final Conclusion and Future Directions**

In the Introduction I have stated that I wanted to uncover some of the magic that is accredited to apologies. There are five main outcomes of the dissertation project, which extend previous research on apologies. Four of these outcomes can be considered as contributing to better understanding the magic of apologies. Firstly, addressing the question which content of apologies is effective, we found for both the interpersonal and the intergroup apologies that their components – operationalized with reference to the models by Blatz et al. (2009) and Kirchhoff et al. (2009) – mattered in terms of the effectiveness of the apologies from the perspective of the transgressed. In the interpersonal context effectiveness meant an increase in forgiveness and in the intergroup context an increase in the acceptance of the apology. Secondly, even though having only received little support, the finding that the components of the apology contributed to their effectiveness seemed to apply slightly more following transgressions of higher severity. Thirdly, the components that had to be included in the apologies in order to observe a significant change in the measurements of effects were context-dependent and varied across studies. Fourthly, we identified six needs categories for transgressed people in the interpersonal context which should be analyzed in further research as mediator variables for the relationship between the utterances of interpersonal apologies and measurements of effects. The fifth outcome of the dissertation project illustrates that the magic of apologies is not so easily uncovered. Addressing the question why the content of apologies contributes to their effectiveness, no satisfying answers were found. Neither the reduction of anger in both the interpersonal and the intergroup context nor the fulfillment of the need of

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empowerment in the intergroup context reliably mediated the relationship between the content of apologies and their effectiveness from the perspective of the transgressed.

Despite the mentioned shortcomings of our studies, it is possible to consider the results within the framework of apologies and conflict resolution in personal one-on-one settings or in the intergroup setting, respectively. Definitely, experimental research on the content of apologies has been sparse so far. Hence, the dissertation project can merely offer a starting point for further inquiries on the questions which content of apologies is effective, why the content of apologies impacts on their effectiveness and under what circumstances. The results of the dissertation project need to be validated or questioned by further research.

For future research on apologies I want to give some recommendations. Future studies should take the models by Blatz et al. (2009) and Kirchhoff et al. (2009) on the components of apologies into account. That would be reasonable in order to establish a series of research designs which refer to the same theoretical models across various studies and contexts. For experimental research on the content of apologies in particular I would suggest two extensions to the research approach of my dissertation project. Firstly, research should also investigate each of the components from the two theoretical models by Blatz et al. (2009) and Kirchhoff et al. (2009) separately. Secondly, the effects of the apology's content should be compared to no-apology conditions. If the experimental approach in Manuscript 1 and 2 of the dissertation project were extended like this in various future studies, findings would be more comparable. Thus, it would be easier to get an overview on findings regarding the content of apologies. As a consequence, future reviews on studies on the apology's content might even allow distinguishing between components of apology which are context-dependent and a set of components that has to be included in an apology across various contexts. Concerning the question why the content of interpersonal apologies is differently effective the six need categories identified in Manuscript 3 could be analyzed as mediator variables.

Some researchers might argue that they are interested in the effects of apologizing on various dependent measures associated with conflict transformation without investigating the elementary content of apologies. I would advise these researchers to have in mind that the content of the apology they scrutinize may influence the changes in the dependent measures in addition to the mere act of apologizing as such. This possibility should at least be critically discussed in studies on the general effectiveness of apologies. Last but not least, future studies should also include research on the perspective of the person or group offering the apology. The analysis of content of apologies from that perspective has so far been widely neglected, in both the interpersonal (Leunissen, De Cremer, & Reinders Folmer, 2012) and the intergroup context (Iyer & Blatz, 2012).

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## **SUMMARY IN GERMAN**

## Summary in German

### Zusammenfassung in Deutsch

In dieser deutschen Zusammenfassung der Dissertation mit dem Thema „On the Content of Apologies“ [wörtliche Übersetzung: Über den Inhalt von Entschuldigungen] werden nach einleitenden Worten die zwei zentralen Fragestellungen des Dissertationsprojektes in Form eines Überblicks theoretisch eingeleitet. Im Anschluss werden die fünf durchgeführten Studien (s. Manuskript 1, 2 und 3) und deren Ergebnisse dargestellt. Abgeschlossen wird mit einer zusammenfassenden Schlussfolgerung.

#### *Einleitende Worte*

Entschuldigungen aussprechen und empfangen ist etwas, das wir bereits in jungen Jahren lernen (Schleien, Ross, & Ross, 2010). Trotzdem fragen sich Forscher, was wir eigentlich über den Akt des Entschuldigens wissen (z.B. Meier, 1998; Smith, 2008). Relativ einig ist man sich hinsichtlich der Beschreibung, dass eine Entschuldigung ein privater oder öffentlicher Akt einer Person oder Gruppe als Reaktion auf Verhalten ist, welches einen Konflikt zur Folge hatte. Der ausführende Akteur ist für das Verhalten verantwortlich oder er ist ein Repräsentant der Verantwortlichen (z.B. Adsit, 2009; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Gill, 2000; Smith, 2008; Tavuchis, 1991). Weiterführende Definitionen von Entschuldigungen sind sehr heterogen. Das betrifft vor allem Aussagen zu den Komponenten von Entschuldigungen, aber auch Aussagen zu den Funktionen von Entschuldigungen (Adsit, 2009).

Mit dem Dissertationsprojekt wollte ich zwei zentrale Fragen zu Entschuldigungen bearbeiten. Beide Fragen habe ich durchgehend aus der Perspektive derer betrachtet, die im Konflikt, für den die Entschuldigung geäußert wird, unterlegen beziehungsweise Opfer waren. *Erstens* wollte ich Antworten auf die Frage finden, *welche* inhaltlichen Komponenten die Wirkung einer Entschuldigung beeinflussen. Dazu wurde die Wirkung von Entschuldigungen mit unterschiedlichen Komponenten in vier experimentellen Studien (Manuskript 1 und 2) auf die Annahmefähigkeit

der Entschuldigung und die Vergebungsbereitschaft gemessen. Des Weiteren wurde mittels zwei der vier experimentellen Studien (jeweils Studie 1 der Manuskripte 1 und 2) untersucht, ob die Antwort auf die Frage, welche inhaltlichen Komponenten effektiv sind, vom Schweregrad der Tat abhängig ist, für die die Entschuldigung geäußert wird. *Zweitens* wollte ich herausfinden, *warum* der Inhalt von Entschuldigungen einen Einfluss auf deren Effektivität hat. Dafür habe ich in den vier experimentellen Studien Mediatorvariablen analysiert, um zu sehen, ob durch sie der Zusammenhang zwischen Inhalt und Wirkung der Entschuldigung erklärt werden kann. Zwei der vier experimentellen Studien haben die zwei zentralen Fragen des Dissertationsprojektes für interpersonale (Manuskript 1) und zwei für intergruppale Entschuldigungen (Manuskript 2) evaluiert. In einer weiteren, nicht experimentellen Studie (Manuskript 3) habe ich für den interpersonalen Kontext eine empirische Analyse von verletzten Bedürfnissen nach Konflikten vorgenommen. Ziel war es, weitere potentielle Mediatorvariablen für den Zusammenhang zwischen Inhalt und Wirkung von interpersonalen Entschuldigungen zu entwickeln. Gemeinsam bilden die fünf Studien über drei Manuskripte verteilt das Dissertationsprojekt.

#### *Welche inhaltlichen Komponenten von Entschuldigungen sind effektiv?*

Bisherige Forschung zu interpersonalen und intergruppalen Entschuldigungen hat zumeist die Effektivität von Entschuldigungen im Vergleich zur Abwesenheit einer Entschuldigung oder einer anderen Aussage wie zum Beispiel einer Rechtfertigung analysiert (z.B. *interpersonal*: Bennett & Earwaker, 1994; Risen & Gilovich, 2007; z.B. *intergruppal*: Brown, Wohl, & Exline, 2008; Leonard, Mackie, & Smith, 2011). Die Ergebnisse eines solchen Forschungsansatzes ermöglichen jedoch keine Aussage darüber, welcher Inhalt einer Entschuldigung zu ihrer Effektivität beiträgt (vgl. Fehr & Gelfand, 2010).

Es gibt bisher nur vereinzelte Studien zu interpersonalen Entschuldigungen, die deren Wirkung in Abhängigkeit von ihren inhaltlichen Komponenten analysieren. Diese Studien weisen darauf hin, dass die Wirkung einer interpersonalen Entschuldigung in der Tat von ihrem Inhalt abhängt (z.B.

Anderson, Linden, & Habra, 2006; Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Förster, & Montada, 2004). Selbiges wird auch für intergrupale Entschuldigungen angenommen (z.B. Griswold, 2007, S. 151; Tavuchis, 1991). Die wenigen experimentellen Ergebnisse zum Inhalt von intergruppalen Entschuldigungen zeigen jedoch keine Übereinstimmung hinsichtlich der Frage, ob die Veränderung des Inhalts von Intergruppen-Entschuldigungen Auswirkungen auf ihre Perzeption hat (Wohl, Hornsey, & Bennett, 2012, Studie 4; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008, Studie 4). Ziel der vier experimentellen Studien meines Dissertationsprojektes zu Entschuldigungen war es, die Analyse der Wirkung des Inhalts von Entschuldigungen systematisch zu testen. Dazu wurden die theoretischen Modelle zu inhaltlichen Komponenten von Blatz, Schumann und Ross (2009) sowie Kirchhoff, Strack und Jäger (2009) als Referenzrahmen für die Operationalisierung der Komponenten gewählt. Die systematische Operationalisierung der Komponenten kann als besondere Weiterentwicklung bisheriger Studien zum Inhalt von Entschuldigungen hervorgehoben werden.

Im Rahmen nicht experimenteller Studien wurde postuliert, dass der Schweregrad einer Tat die Leichtigkeit, mit der Entschuldigungen akzeptiert werden, beeinflusst (Benoit, 1995). Ohbuchi, Kameda und Agarie (1989) schlagen vor, dass besonders nach schweren Vergehen eine Entschuldigung elaborierter sein muss. Daher sollte mit zwei experimentellen Studien des Dissertationsprojektes untersucht werden, ob die Auswirkung der Veränderung der inhaltlichen Komponenten von Entschuldigungen auf deren Effektivität besonders nach Vergehen mit höherem Schweregrad beobachtbar ist.

#### *Warum hat der Inhalt von Entschuldigungen einen Einfluss auf deren Effektivität?*

Bezüglich der Frage, warum der Inhalt von Entschuldigungen einen Einfluss auf deren Effektivität hat, wurden die Reduktion von Ärger und die Erfüllung von verletzten Bedürfnissen als Mediatorvariablen in Betracht gezogen. Im interpersonalen Kontext haben vorherige Studien bereits aufgedeckt, dass Entschuldigungen Ärger reduzieren können (z.B. Hareli & Eisikovits, 2006) und die Reduktion von Ärger zum Beispiel den Zusammenhang zwischen Perspektivenübernahme und

Vergebung erklärt (Takaku, 2001). Eine Untersuchung von Ärgerreduktion als Mediatorvariable zwischen dem Inhalt von interpersonalen Entschuldigungen und ihrer Effektivität lag daher nahe. Ähnliches lässt sich für den Bereich der intergruppalen Entschuldigungen sagen. Es konnte bereits gezeigt werden, dass Ärger den Zusammenhang zwischen Intergruppen-Entschuldigungen und dem Bedürfnis nach Vergeltung der Geschädigten erklärt (Leonard et al., 2011). Für das Dissertationsprojekt wurde gefragt, ob das auch für den Zusammenhang zwischen dem Inhalt von intergruppalen Entschuldigungen und ihrer Effektivität gilt.

Es wird angenommen, dass Konflikte Bedürfnisse verletzen, die im Nachhinein adressiert und erfüllt werden müssen, um Versöhnung zu ermöglichen (z.B. Shnabel, Nadler, Canetti-Nisim, & Ullrich, 2008). Die Frage, ob das Erfüllen von verletzten Bedürfnissen der Geschädigten die unterschiedliche Wirkung von verschiedenen interpersonalen Entschuldigungen erklären kann, ist nicht einfach zu beantworten. Grund hierfür ist, dass die Bedürfniskategorien, die in der Literatur diskutiert werden und nach interpersonalen Konflikten relevant sein könnten, sehr heterogen und wenig empirisch fundiert sind (z.B. Max-Neef, Elizalde, & Hopenhayn, 1991; Obrecht, 2005). Daher wollte ich mit dem Dissertationsprojekt eine empirische Kategorisierung hinsichtlich der Frage vornehmen, welche Bedürfnisse aus der Opferperspektive nach interpersonalen Konflikten verletzt sein können.

Auf dem Level von intergruppalen Beziehungen wird vor allem die Relevanz des Bedürfnisses nach Ermächtigung der unterlegenen Konfliktpartei für die Lösung von Konflikten diskutiert (z.B. Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Deswegen habe ich mich bei den Analysen im Intergruppenkontext auf dieses Bedürfnis beschränkt. Ich wollte testen, ob eine Erfüllung des Bedürfnisses nach Ermächtigung im Anschluss an einen Intergruppenkonflikt den Zusammenhang zwischen einer intergruppalen Entschuldigung und deren Effektivität erklären kann.

#### *Die drei Manuskripte des Dissertationsprojektes*

Mit dem Manuskript 1 des Dissertationsprojektes wurden interpersonale Entschuldigungen nach einem Nachbarschaftskonflikt analysiert. Das Manuskript besteht aus zwei experimentellen

Onlinestudien mit deutschen Stichproben (Studie 1: N = 192; Studie 2: N = 88). Mit der ersten Hypothese in jeder der beiden Studien wurde postuliert, welcher Inhalt von interpersonalen Entschuldigungen effektiv ist. Für die Analyse der ersten Hypothese wurde die Wirkung von interpersonalen Entschuldigungen in Abhängigkeit von der systematischen Variation der inhaltlichen Komponenten einer Entschuldigung nach Kirchhoff et al. (2009) auf die Vergebungsbereitschaft betrachtet. Des Weiteren haben wir mit der ersten Hypothese in Studie 1 vorgeschlagen, dass die Effekte, die auf Grund des variierenden Inhalts zu beobachten sind, besonders nach schweren Vergehen sichtbar werden. In Studie 2 des Manuskripts 1 wurde nur die Bedingung analysiert, die sich in der ersten Studie als schweres Vergehen herausgestellt hatte. Die zweite Hypothese, die in beiden Studien untersucht wurde, fokussierte den Zusammenhang zwischen dem Inhalt einer interpersonalen Entschuldigung und der Vergebungsbereitschaft, indem Ärgerreduktion als Mediatorvariable analysiert wurde. Mit dieser Hypothese sollten Antworten auf die Frage gefunden werden, warum der Inhalt von interpersonalen Entschuldigungen unterschiedlich effektiv ist.

Die Ergebnisse der ersten Studie des Manuskripts 1 wiesen darauf hin, dass interpersonale Entschuldigungen, die mehrere der Komponenten von Kirchhoff et al. (2009) enthielten, mehr Vergebung induziert haben als Entschuldigungen, die weniger dieser Elemente enthielten. Es gab Hinweise darauf, dass dies besonders nach dem schwereren Vergehen von Bedeutung war. Studie 1 ergab zudem, dass einige der Komponenten von Entschuldigungen nach Kirchhoff et al. (2009) als wichtiger eingestuft wurden als andere. In Studie 2 wurde die Wichtigkeitsbewertung für das Experiment genutzt, indem die weniger vollständigen, interpersonalen Entschuldigungen stets wichtigere Komponenten enthielten als die vollständigeren. Ziel war es, für das schwerere Vergehen aus Studie 1 zu testen, ob die vollständigeren Entschuldigungen trotzdem mehr Vergebung induzierten als die weniger vollständigen. Die Ergebnisse der zweiten Studie zeigten, dass eine interpersonale Entschuldigung, die die wichtigste Komponente enthielt, zwar weniger erfolgreich war als eine, die die vier wichtigsten Komponenten enthielt, dass aber eine Addition weiterer Komponenten zu den vier wichtigsten die Vergebungsbereitschaft nicht weiter erhöhte. Die vier



wichtigsten Komponenten waren die Äußerung von Emotionen, das Eingestehen eines Fehlers, eine Aussage der Entschuldigung (wie z.B. „ich entschuldige mich“) und ein Erklärungsversuch. Hinsichtlich der Frage, warum der Inhalt von interpersonalen Entschuldigungen unterschiedlich erfolgreich ist, konnte Ärgerreduktion den Zusammenhang zwischen dem Inhalt einer Entschuldigung und der Vergebungsbereitschaft nur in Studie 1, nicht aber in Studie 2 erklären.

In Manuskript 2 sind zwei experimentelle Studien integriert. Die erste wurde in Deutschland (N = 289) und die zweite in Bosnien und Herzegowina (BiH; N = 110) durchgeführt. Es wurden ähnliche Hypothesen wie in Manuskript 1 adressiert, aber dieses Mal in Bezug auf intergrupale Entschuldigungen. In Deutschland wurde der Intergruppenkontext über Diskriminierung von Frauen auf Grund ihres Geschlechts im universitären Bereich hergestellt und in BiH über Kriegsverbrechen zwischen 1992 und 1995. Um Antworten auf die Fragen zu finden, welche Intergruppen-Entschuldigungen effektiv sind, wurde die Wirkung von Entschuldigungen in Abhängigkeit von ihren inhaltlichen Komponenten analysiert. Der Inhalt der Intergruppen-Entschuldigungen wurde nicht nur in Anlehnung an das Modell von Kirchhoff et al. (2009) zu den Komponenten von Entschuldigungen variiert; auch das Modell von Blatz et al. (2009) wurde auf Grund seines speziellen Intergruppen-Fokus berücksichtigt. Da sich im Zusammenhang mit den Studien in Manuskript 1 gezeigt hatte, dass die Wichtigkeit der Komponenten einer Entschuldigung variieren kann, wurden für die Studien des Manuskripts 2 Vorstudien zu der Relevanz der Komponenten nach Blatz et al. (2009) und Kirchhoff et al. (2009) für den jeweiligen Kontext durchgeführt. Des Weiteren wurde in der Studie 1 untersucht, ob die Effekte, die auf Grund der Variation des Inhalts der Intergruppen-Entschuldigung auftreten, besonders nach einem schwereren Vergehen zu beobachten sind. Hinsichtlich der Frage, warum Intergruppen-Entschuldigungen unterschiedlich effektiv sind, wurden die Reduktion von Ärger und die Wahrnehmung von Ermächtigung als Mediatorvariablen für den Zusammenhang zwischen dem Inhalt der Entschuldigungen und den Effektivitätsmaßen analysiert.

Die Ergebnisse der Studie 1 des Manuskripts 2 zeigten, dass die Variation der inhaltlichen Komponenten einer Intergruppen-Entschuldigung einen Einfluss auf die Annahmefähigkeit der Entschuldigung hatte. Auf die Vergebungsbereitschaft hatte die Variation der inhaltlichen Komponenten der Entschuldigung keinen Einfluss. Dass der Inhalt einer intergruppalen Entschuldigung besonders nach schweren Vergehen relevant ist, konnte mit Studie 1 in Ansätzen bestätigt werden. Studie 2 zeigte ebenfalls, dass die inhaltlichen Komponenten der Intergruppen-Entschuldigung einen Einfluss auf die Annahmefähigkeit der Entschuldigung hatten, aber nicht auf die Vergebungsbereitschaft. Es unterschied sich jedoch über die zwei Studien des zweiten Manuskripts hinweg, welche Komponenten besonders relevant waren. In Studie 1 war eine Intergruppen-Entschuldigung, die die Komponente einer Emotionsäußerung zusätzlich zu den Komponenten der Benennung des Vergehens, der Aussage einer Entschuldigung („wir entschuldigen uns“), einer Verantwortungsübernahme und einer Aussage, dass die Tat nicht wiederholt wird, erfolgreicher als Entschuldigungen, die weniger dieser Komponenten enthielten. In Studie 2 wurde eine intergruppalen Entschuldigung mit Anerkennung des Leids, der Benennung des Vergehens, der Aussage einer Entschuldigung („wir entschuldigen uns“) und einem Eingeständnis, dass Normen verletzt wurden, häufiger akzeptiert als Entschuldigungen, die weniger dieser Komponenten enthielten. In keiner der beiden Studien hat Ärgerreduktion oder die Wahrnehmung von Ermächtigung den Zusammenhang zwischen dem Inhalt der Intergruppen-Entschuldigung und den Maßen für ihre Effektivität erklärt.

Mit der Studie des Manuskripts 3 wurden Bedürfniskategorien untersucht, die auf der Seite derer, die sich auf Grund eines interpersonalen Konfliktes unterlegen fühlten, verletzt sein können. Dazu wurden 478 Personen gebeten, online über einen interpersonalen Konflikt zu berichten, den sie erlebt hatten. Sie sollten Fragen zu in diesem Konflikt verletzten Bedürfnissen beantworten. Mittels Faktorenanalysen konnten sechs relevante Bedürfnisse extrahiert werden. Diese waren: das Bedürfnis nach Respekt, das Bedürfnis nach Bedeutung, das Bedürfnis nach Akzeptanz, das Bedürfnis nach Mühe, das Bedürfnis, etwas zu leisten und das Bedürfnis nach Sicherheit.

*Zusammenfassende Schlussfolgerung*

Abschließend kann gesagt werden, dass mit dem Dissertationsprojekt fünf zentrale Ergebnisse gefunden wurden, die die bisherige Forschung zu Entschuldigungen ergänzen und erweitern. Erstens wurde herausgefunden, dass die inhaltlichen Komponenten interpersonaler und intergruppalen Entschuldigungen – operationalisiert mit Bezug auf die Entschuldigungs-Modelle von Blatz et al. (2009) und Kirchhoff et al. (2009) – einen Einfluss auf ihre Effektivität aus der Perspektive der unterlegenen Konfliktparteien hatten. Im interpersonalen Kontext veränderte sich in Abhängigkeit vom Inhalt der Entschuldigung die Vergebungsbereitschaft und im intergruppalen Kontext die Annahmefähigkeit der Entschuldigung. Zweitens gab es leichte Hinweise darauf, dass die inhaltlichen Komponenten vor allem nach schweren Vergehen die Wirkung der Entschuldigung beeinflussten. Drittens waren die Komponenten, die einen relevanten Einfluss auf die Vergebungs- oder die Annahmefähigkeit der Entschuldigung hatten, kontextabhängig. Letzteres meint, dass Zusammensetzung und Anzahl der inhaltlichen Komponenten in den Entschuldigungen, die erfolgreicher waren als weniger vollständige Entschuldigungen, über die Studien hinweg variierten. Viertens konnte keine zufriedenstellende Antwort auf die Frage gefunden werden, warum der Inhalt von Entschuldigungen unterschiedlich effektiv ist. Ärgerreduktion konnte weder im interpersonalen noch im intergruppalen Kontext den Zusammenhang zwischen dem Inhalt von Entschuldigungen und den Maßen der Effektivität angemessen erklären. Selbiges traf für das Bedürfnis nach Ermächtigung der unterlegenen Konfliktpartei im intergruppalen Kontext zu. Fünftens konnten für den interpersonalen Bereich sechs Bedürfnisse identifiziert werden, die nach einem interpersonalen Konflikt auf der Seite der unterlegenen Konfliktpartei verletzt sein können. Diese sechs Bedürfnisse können in der weiteren Forschung als Mediatorvariablen für den Zusammenhang zwischen der Äußerung einer interpersonalen Entschuldigung und Maßen der Effektivität untersucht werden.

Die Studien weisen einige zentrale Mängel auf. Für die vier experimentellen Studien zu Entschuldigungen ist dies zum Beispiel die fehlende ökologische Validität oder die Tatsache, dass nicht alle möglichen Kombinationen der Komponenten, die in den theoretischen Modellen von Blatz

et al. (2009) und Kirchhoff et al. (2009) vorgeschlagen werden, getestet wurden. Auch die suggerierte Täter-Opfer-Dichotomie aller fünf Studien muss kritisch betrachtet werden. Dennoch können die Ergebnisse des Dissertationsprojektes für Ansätze der Konfliktlösung im interpersonalen bzw. im intergruppalen Bereich in Betracht gezogen werden. Weitere Forschung ist jedoch unabdinglich, um die Ergebnisse des vorliegenden Dissertationsprojektes zu validieren und gegebenenfalls kritisch in Frage zu stellen und zu revidieren.

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**Jene, die ich an dieser Stelle nicht benannt und doch nicht vergessen habe.**

### **Statement of Conduct in German**

Ich versichere, dass ich die vorliegende Dissertation „On the Content of Apologies“ selbständig und ohne unerlaubte Hilfe angefertigt habe. Dabei habe ich mich keiner anderen als der mir ausdrücklich bezeichneten Quellen und Hilfen bedient.

Die Dissertation wurde weder in der jetzigen noch in einer ähnlichen Form bei einer anderen Hochschule eingereicht und hat noch keinen sonstigen Prüfungszwecken gedient.

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Johanna Kirchhoff

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Ort und Datum